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[HOLIDAY TIME—SOMETHING MORE THAN A FLIRTATION.]

A WOMAN'S MERCY.

CHAPTER I.

THE THREE GRACES.

"O the broom, the bonny broom,
The broom that makes full sore;
A woman's mercy is very little,
But a man's mercy is more."

The quaint words of the old ballad telling of woman's treachery rang out in the rich full tones of a wonderful contralto voice, such a voice as one hears but once in a lifetime; its deep full sweetness flooded the old farm parlour and floated out on the still summer air. The singer was a beautiful girl-woman, simply dressed in some soft-tinted material that clung to the lines of her superb figure as the mists of morning hang about the earth.

So intent was she upon her music that she did not notice the whispered comments of her two sisters upon its merits, but commenced afresh and sang it through with fresh awakened feeling, all the story of the schoolboy who was murdered long ago in Lincoln by the brutality

of a fanatic Jewess. Ruth Grace touched the grand piano with a masterly hand; through all the accompaniment the chords told back to the key-note.

When the song was ended she sat in silence, but in her mind singing it over afresh, till her younger sister Lavinia said, heartily,—

"Leave the composition as it is, Rue; it is perfect."

Ruth smiled, and looked at her elder sister, Diana, for her opinion. Di was holding her head on one side to see the effect of a dead leaf foreground in an artistic little Arcadian scene she had been sketching. She said in her shrewd common-sense tones,—

"Strike out a few of the verses where the music is monotonous, give a shake to the boy's appeal, and end with a crash as though your feelings were too much for you; then your song will be sung and listened to, for the melody is no mean composition for an amateur. Liv always praises everything, you know, to avoid argument."

Ruth nodded as she accepted part of her sister's advice and shortened the song, then closed the piano, with a sigh, saying,—

"Somehow my execution always falls short of my conceptions and disappoints me."

"If one was always satisfied with one's work there would be little hope of improvement," said Di, in her hopeful, exhilarating voice, as she laid painting materials tidily aside, and urged Liv to close her book.

"Tis getting dusk, girls; and there is the tea to get ready. Father said they would be home at eight, and mother is sure to be tired; 'tis so hot, and she goes out so rarely. I wonder what Aunt Becky is like? Father says she is a queer customer."

"Mother says she is very rich," said Liv, with a yawn, as she rose and marked the page in the novel she was reading.

"And if she is so rich, perhaps, she may help the dad out of his difficulties. She is his brother's widow, and childless; she can't know what to do with all her income."

Ruth laid her hand on her sister's shoulder, gravely, saying, "Do you think it is nice, dear, to discuss the advantage our aunt's visit may bring us? Don't you see that being our guest puts it out of father's power to borrow of her?"

"I can't say I do. I say, let her see our situation and remedy it, if she feels so disposed."

Diana rearranged the little card-table in the recess of the bow-window, smelt the bowl of dewy tea-roses upon it, and said, shortly, "Livvy has no pride. I can hardly believe sometimes that she is a Grace at all, her ideas are all so different to ours."

"Is pride an attribute of the Graces, my chaste Diana?"

"I think so; some sort of pride, such now as an honest independence."

"That brings one to the Union, I suppose? The pride of saying 'poverty is no crime,' and yet feeling heartily ashamed of it the whole time," answered Lavinia, flippantly.

"Now, Liv, you are trying to make Di storm, and you don't mean what you say. I'm sure you'd be the last to ask a favour of a rich relative who has ignored us so long," said Ruth.

"Yes; the last to ask, but the first to suggest some one else asking. Why should she make a hospital of our home? She forgot us in health, and in sickness finds we may be useful to give her a month among the scenes of her youth. I say let her come by all means, but make her pay for the inconvenience and expense her visit must be to us."

"There, there," said Diana, shortly, "that's enough. I declare this dispute has quite roused you up, Liv. It is the first time I have heard you speak out to-day."

"It has been such a drowsy day," said Ruth, "all nature has seemed at rest. Do you know I fancy this intense stillness means a tempest; there is a brooding fullness about the clouds, and the birds fly low as though to seek shelter on the earth from the anger of the sky."

She shivered as she spoke, as though thoughts of a storm were unpleasant forebodings. Diana put her shapely hand on her sister's shoulder, and said affectionately:

"Why anticipate the unaccountable fear you feel of a storm? Come, help me to make the place pleasant for our folks; and you, Liv, run and find some fresh flowers."

"I'm sure I shall not run, 'tis too hot, but I'll get the flowers."

As the three sisters stood together in the gloaming, their fresh faces turned towards the waning light, they made a splendid picture; all tall young goddesses, straight as poplars, with a bright look of perfect health about them—three cherries on one stalk, each a beauty. Diana, the eldest, was about one-and-twenty, with glorious dark eyes and hair, warm-tinted skin, handsome features, and an open honest look such as one sees too rarely in a man, and scarcely ever in a woman.

All the sisters were above the average height, and finely proportioned, as daughters of a son of Anak. Lavinia, the youngest, a girl of seventeen, was a perfect Hebe, with languishing eyes of rare china blue; her fleecy hair was of the delicate tint of ripe corn, her skin like the bloom of a peach; her lips had that "almond-pout" one of our poets thought so lovely. Her whole air was soft, languid, and reposeful.

The other sister, Ruth, was in the dawning of perfect womanhood, neither dark nor fair, yet possessing the beauty of both. Her soft brown hair waved away from a broad brow that told of intellect of no mean order; her eyes were of that dusky purple tint one sees in the petals of a pansy, clear and still, as though they had been notched out of heaven one frosty winter night when the blue of the sky surpasses every earthly tint. Her features were less faultless than her sisters, but this gave greater animation to her looks; her lips, dimpled at the corners when she smiled, looked tenderly sensitive in repose. She had less vivid tints than her sisters, but the softer bloom became her womanly gracious looks better than the brighter blossoming. She had small nervous hands, the black brows and lashes of a Spaniard, and the imperious grace of a queen.

Farmer Grace was wont to boast that no

such sight as his three Graces could be shown on the country side; and his wife, the cultivated daughter of a poor clergyman, had trained them with a perfect culture unknown to our town-belles. Made to work from childhood their limbs were well developed. "Always be busy, and you will always be at your best," was one of the good mother's maxims. She taught them early to take a pride in their looks, a pride that was not vanity, but a proper respect for themselves, and the dower of gracious looks God had given them.

"Always be neat, always be dressed as if going to a feast," the mother would say; "for who so worthy the respect of pleasant, decent looks as your father, my good John?"

The family had been slipping into poverty for years past, times had been hard for farmers; failure of crops was becoming quite a looked-for misfortune, and, careful as their housekeeping was, poverty began to leave its defacing footmarks on the old homestead. Carpets and curtains faded and fell out of use; the girls' dresses were no longer changed with the seasons; yet somehow in their faded, much worn articles of attire, these healthy young goddesses managed to look neat and nice. Fresh flowers, clean lace and linen were their ornaments, which they used to advantage.

Poverty had not yet pinched them cruelly, for they had the necessities of life and their well-loved home, were still together, and when the daily duties were ended could follow their studies and pastimes in peace. They were a musical family, and that means a great amount of brightness in a household. The farmer forgot his worries while joining in his daughters' song; the mother's anxious heart was uplifted with pride and hope when she listened to songs of Ruth's composing, for Ruth was by all consent the genius of the family.

Dear, modest, retiring Ruth, who, like the birds, sang music of her own out of the joyfulness of her youth and the richness of her imaginings. The poetry of sound sat enthroned in her soul, only, as she said to her sisters, she could not make her melodies match her imaginings.

Fairlight Grange Farm, or the Grange Farm as it was commonly called, stood on the borders of Salisbury Plain, a place difficult to get at from all parts. In its prosperous days it had been quite a show place, because of the picturesque building of the old house of Gothic structure, overgrown with ivy, with rose and honeysuckle. It was approached by a broad grassy avenue, over which fine, full-leaved beech trees almost met. In the spacious gardens quaint little summer houses peeped out of bowers of old world flowers. The girls kept the garden trim and neat between them; Liv loved her rose bushes, Ruth her ferns and lilies, while Diana took all the flower world into her large heart, and loved and cared for them all.

So with their household duties, Liv and Rue each had their favourite tasks, and did them well, while Di directed the comfort of the whole house, and was next to the good mother in authority.

These simple, honest English girls were contented and happy, yet sometimes to them all came the longing to see the world beyond, the wish for a wider scope, a fuller existence; and to all of them the change was coming soon that should launch them out from their safe harbour into the wide ocean of life. They did not feel the coming change; Di was too full of work, Rue of dreaming; but Liv felt her repose stirred by a certain restlessness; only she, the youngest, yet most worldly wise, felt the change this rich aunt's visit might foretell.

While she clipped her roses she thought any change preferable to their present stagnant dull calm of hopeless lessening of means. Poverty, which no pitilessly depresses the aged, in the young breeds impatience, discontent—ah! and, sad to say, sometimes dishonour.

The sound of wheels disturbed Livy at her task. With her lap full of roses she ran round

to the front of the house; and as the sisters stood together in the porch an old-fashioned chaise, drawn by a fat grey mare, drove up, and Farmer Grace, a picture of an honest robust yeoman, sprang out, and extended his sinewy brown hand to a little old lady, whose pale pinched face and bright dark eyes showed through a large veil of lace; keen, true eyes they were, that seemed to look into one's inner life. Her hair was bobbing upon her high forehead in little frosty curls; her wide humorous mouth was relaxed into a smile of surprise at the sight of the three girls, who decided among themselves that they liked the look of her, although she was dressed in a curious bygone fashion, that looked less strange to their primitive taste than to girls bred in cities.

Old Mrs. David Grace wore side-laced boots, a double skirt, and a quaint gipsy cloak, while her head was adorned by a quakerish cottage bonnet. She nodded good-naturedly, as her brother-in-law said, with some pride,—

"Allow me to introduce my three Graces. Di, the eldest, is the darkest; Rue, the next, is the clever one; Liv, the fairy, is the youngest and the saniciest, aren't you, pet?"

The Graces were not given to kissing, so they shook hands with the old lady heartily, simply saying, "They were glad to see her."

Then Ruth crept off to her mother—a buxom, soft-eyed dame, who might have passed for an older sister—and whispered, "Mother, you took the keys with you, so we could not make the tea. Give them to me quick; I'll slip round to Hannah, and have all right by the time you've got off your bonnet."

Mrs. Grace smiled as she gave the required keys, and said to Di, who was feeding the mare with biscuits, "Call Giles, Di, to see to the mare; your father is tired. Did you see that Hannah cooked the fowl properly?"

"I cooked it myself, mother; Hannah had so much to do; there was butter to churn, and a dozen extra things besides. Don't worry about anything, everything is done; only try to enjoy a good tea, you look so tired."

Divested of her bonnet and cloak, Mrs. David Grace looked more quaint than ever. She was not more than sixty, but sickness had aged her greatly; she was painfully thin, and wore her clothes clinging tightly about her, except her skirts, which were fluted out like a flower-pot.

She eyed the girls approvingly as they went about their usual occupations, leaving their mother leisure to rest and entertain her visitor with such news as their stagnant life afforded. Mrs. David's curt, quick speech cut in now and again with some sharp concise remark that made Lavinia look upon her with interest, for that inquiring young lady liked anything new, and her aunt was an experience to her.

After tea the girls sang a trio called "The meeting of the ships," while their father and mother, hand in hand, whispered in the window seat like a couple of young lovers; and their aunt sat very upright in the shadows, much moved by the music that recalled her youth and the young husband who, though it had been whispered he had married her for her money, never failed in loving kindness to his plain old wife, who mourned him now as tenderly as on the day when they brought him home from the hunting field dead, crushed by his horse. She had loved him as only a lonely old maid could love; and when his sudden death came to close so disastrously their brief married life she drooped and wanted to die too; but heaven willed it otherwise, and she took up her life afresh and fought out the good fight to the end uncomplainingly. She took to heart all her dead husband had loved, and so it came about that she came into Wiltshire to cultivate the acquaintance of his only brother and his family.

She stayed with them some time and got fond of their simple home life, dreading the time when she should return to the lonely splendour of her home in London, and lose all the freshness and cheerfulness of her nieces' society.

After the first week the girls had accepted

her as a hard fact, not to be got rid of or be allowed to become burdensome; they went their way, she hers, and so saw but little of each other.

They noticed, though, that she seemed to think a great deal of their father, perhaps because of his likeness to her lost David; and she appeared to be greatly interested in Ruth's love of music and talent for composing. She scolded Liv sometimes, and then there would be a brisk passage-of-arms between them that seemed to entertain the old lady vastly.

Mrs. Grace had taken to her sister-in-law greatly when she found that, with all her oddities, she was a lady, and a true-hearted woman.

Just when the summer heat was at its height she surprised them all by saying one morning:

"I shall start for the Norfolk coast in two days' time, Mrs. Grace. I hear the girls have never seen the sea; I think they deserve a holiday, so if you can spare them let them come with me. I promise they shall enjoy the change; and, really, I think Rue looks as though she needed it."

Three pairs of bright entreating eyes turned to the good mother, who flushed and paled under their fire, and said:

"It is very good of you to wish to take them, and I wish they could go, but I fear it is not possible just now."

Here Mrs. Grace glanced nervously at her husband, who, with his usual open honest way, at once said, "The fact is, Mrs. David, we can't afford to get their rig-out. Another year, perhaps, things may be different; then, if you'd give them a holiday, I should be greatly indebted to you."

Di ont some fresh bread-and-butter, and nodded cheerfully to her dad, as though she agreed with him. The flush that had flown to Rue's face at mention of a chance of hearing the distant music of the sea faded out. Liv said eagerly, "If aunt will not be ashamed of our shabby clothes, let us go as best we can; it would be so splendid."

"Of course, if you would consent to spare them," said Mrs. David, "I should expect to provide for the extra expense of a few fresh dresses—a trifling difficulty that it would make me happy to remove."

All the Graces' pride flushed up in the five faces at once; then Mrs. Grace said, softly, "If you would kindly consider it a loan, Rebecca, I fancy their father might accept the condition. Is it not so, dear?"

"Certainly it is."

"Well then," said Mrs. David, "that's settled. We will drive into Salisbury to-day, and get what we want. There is a nice shop, if I remember rightly, at the top of Catherine-street, where we can get all we want ready-made. Hurry over your morning tasks, girls, and let's be off soon, before the sun gets unbearable. Di can drive, and Rue and Liv sit behind."

So it was settled.

CHAPTER II.

HOLIDAY TIME.

In Salisbury Mrs. David bought each of the girls a couple of dresses—one of dark serge, and the other of some thin summer material—to provide against change in the weather. Then she got them three handsome mantles, and hats, a couple of pairs of boots each, some gloves, and huge white sunshades. The girls shuddered to think of the sum she had expended; but were set at ease when the old lady said their father's loan would amount to five pounds only, and pretended that was about what she had spent.

After they had done their shopping she suggested a little dinner at the White Hart, which the girls greatly enjoyed. Then she took them to the afternoon service at the cathedral, and watched Ruth's rapt look as the splendid organ flooded God's house with celestial harmony.

After a feast at a pastry cook's they drove

home through the scented summer air, and Mrs. David found herself listening to the merry chatter of the girls, with an answering gladness in her heart. For awhile she forgot her sorrow, and allowed herself to be light-hearted through them.

At the appointed time they started on their tedious journey, slept a night at an hotel in town, and then, at the earnest entreaty of the girls, started from London-bridge to go by boat to Yarmouth, where, Mrs. David informed them, she always hired a little place for the summer months—a house facing the sea—which was let to her furnished by an old woman.

"She is rather fidgetty, girls, not used to young people; so mind you do not damage anything about the place. She is what she calls 'very particular about her things,' and does not like to see them ill-used."

Mrs. David enjoyed the girls' delight at every fresh sight, and enjoyed, too, the admiration of people's looks at sight of three such fresh and glorious specimens of womanhood.

They had a very fair passage, and arrived at Yarmouth at the first fall of the evening. The girls were greatly amused by the crowd of folks touting on the quay, which is over a mile in length, and boasts a fine avenue of trees. One of the most interesting spots in Yarmouth, the old lady informed them, was the South Quay. Here they got a cab, and drove along the Drive till they came opposite the Britannia Pier, where a band was playing, and stopped before a pretty little house with a lawn in front—a house covered with some creeping plant that was bright with bunches of splendid violet blossoms.

The pairs of bright eyes took in all the strange scene as groups of gorgeously dressed folks crowded along, or stood to listen to the band close by. Everything was astir with life and activity, while out at sea the calm water was broken by the waves that beat upon the Scroby Sands. The wonderful sands along the North Denes attracted Ruth's attention by their grand monotony.

"Come in, child, and get some tea and rest; then you shall see how you like sand to walk upon after green fields and hard turnpike roads."

The little house was showily furnished with all sorts of cheap finery. Liv, who was a rare hand at breaking things, amused her aunt by requesting that she would order the landlady to "remove those bangles."

The first morning the girls bathed, and came out of the sea with their hair floating below their waists in wonderful ripples. Mrs. David before starting out had given them these orders:—"They were to be allowed to go out alone in the evening, but were to keep together and be home before ten. They were not, on any account, to allow a stranger to speak to them, and they were each to keep in their pockets two sovereigns which she gave them—not to spend, but to make them feel independent. They were to speak at once if there was anything they wanted to eat, to drink, or wear, and to tell her whenever they fancied to go anywhere."

The girls agreed to all she proposed, and the first request came from Livy, who said, "Oh! I should like to go for a sail; the sea looks so lovely, and the distant sails look like white wings in the bleaching light of the sun."

She flushed up painfully at the longing had left her lips, for the sisters had agreed never to wish aloud to go anywhere unless Mrs. David had first suggested it. The sisters' eyes spoke their reproach so plainly that their aunt said, looking sharply from one to the other:

"Come, now, always be honest and open, and let me know how to make you enjoy yourselves. Remember this is to be your holiday, and I want it to be a happy one. Why do you look such dreadful things at Livy because she expressed a wish for a sail? Let us go, by all means, it is just the morning for it; we shall only be out a couple of hours, and have plenty of time to get home for luncheon. Come girls."

The old lady mounted the ladder briskly, and was quickly followed by the girls. Then three handsome young giants in serge suits followed, with cigars in their mouths and papers in their hands. After their first surprised stare at the lovely young faces and the quaint old one, they threw away their cigars, and buried their faces behind their papers.

One, a Saxon-faced fellow, with clear grey eyes and a jolly brown face, kept peeping above his paper at Ruth, who sat opposite him, her eyes shining with pleasure, her pretty lips apart, and all her damp hair blowing about her like newly cast-up seaweed. Another, an older man, with a pleasant plain face, and a look of power about him, seemed attracted by Diana's gipsy beauty and clear bright voice; while a third, a handsome lad of twenty, with a dark high-bred face, feasted his eyes on Livy's fairness with unabashed delight.

Mrs. David stirred in her seat uneasily; she could see these men were gentlemen, and felt annoyed that they took such unmistakable interest in her nieces, who, however, were too much interested in the sea and the sights on shore—too eager to be off to notice the admiration that so vexed their aunt, who, like a sensible woman, decided that no man could keep his eyes off such fairness as she saw in the girls' faces, and so forgave them.

It was a wonderful morning; the little ship went "curtseying o'er the billows" like a bird upon a wind cloud. The breeze blew freshly in their faces as though the very air of Heaven had a salute for them.

Ruth's eyes grew misty with a strange new feeling that seemed to be a painful pleasure. She felt life held such new wonders for her that she almost feared it; smiles and tears got mixed with her while looking from sea to sky, and realizing the vastness of creation. The grey-eyed giant watched her moved looks, and thought:

"Ah! here is a woman with a soul, the greatness of which perplexes her. Oh! what a lovable look she has—so sweet, so true, so fresh. I will get to know her, it looks worth while. I wonder who the quaint old party is who has her in charge? A lady, I can see, but unconventional, or she would not have brought these girls to this Bohemian place. By Jove! Rodney is struck with the gipsy, and Cecil with the lark-looking lass! Oh, we are in for a triplet of love stories. This is promising."

During the sail these gentlemen found it easy to strike up an acquaintance with Mrs. David, who, being an old traveller, had not the English horror of speaking to strangers; and, what was more, she knew how to make them understand that the acquaintance ended at parting; so when the gentlemen handed them out of the boat she nodded and smiled, sending the girls on before her.

The gentlemen raised their hats courteously, then looked into each other's faces.

"So far shalt thou go, but no farther, my fine fellows," said the stout man with the jolly clover face, his eyes sparkling with amusement at his friend's or pupil's chagrin.

"Come, Rodney, you were as much struck with the dark one as Cecil with the fair."

"And you, Athole, were dead nuts on the brownie. Real beauties, all of them. I wonder where they are staying? The girls have a country accent, but the old lady—though she does cut such a queer figure—is evidently accustomed to society; a cool hand, too, by Jove!"

"I fancy I know who she is," said Rodney Lucon; "I have met her somewhere. She is the only daughter of the late Judge Bachan, was a great heiress, and married a young lawyer who was killed hunting. The man married her for her money, there is little doubt, but he had the grace to be good to her, and I have heard they lived happily. His name was David Grace, of the Inner Temple. I should imagine these girls belong to his people."

As he finished speaking he lighted a fresh cigar and sat down on the sands. Cecil Caithness followed suit, saying, "I believe you know everybody and everything, Rodney; I never saw such a chap to hunt up evidence. If you

knew the old lady's husband you had better invent some pretty romance about a past friendship and get up an acquaintance for us. Those girls are worth following up; 'tis denced dull, and they are the first fetching girls we have seen here."

Athole listened in silence, his eyes following the flight of a bird that soared singing seaward. Somehow he did not like the girls discussed so carelessly; they looked as though they had not been accustomed to such open admiration as their attention to them that morning had expressed.

Cecil pushed him with his foot, saying, "See how goody one gets when one is engaged. Athole has not expressed an opinion on the beauties."

Athole turned quickly, saying, curtly, "I don't care to hear modest women discussed in a public place; I have womenkind of my own, perhaps that's the reason. Besides, you fellows have spoken so loudly that you have set half-a-dozen men gaping after the girls already. Come, we ordered lunch at two, and we must go in for a heavy read this afternoon; we are getting behind with our work. I want to pass, and I certainly shall not, unless I make good use of this 'long.'"

"I'm with you there, Athole, for I must pull off the 'big go' with honours, or I shall have no chance with my uncle, who has promised me a preferment. Cecil, I suppose, is careless about it; that's the benefit or 'contrariwise' of being a gold tuft."

Cecil lifted his handsome brows, and said, shortly, "It does not follow that one should not make use of his brain power because it has pleased fortune to place him above the necessity of working for his living. I am with you, too, about the reading. Suppose we paddle off to our diggings."

They rose and leisurely strolled towards the Star Hotel, where they entered the artistically antique Nelson room, and were soon discussing merrily a dainty repast. Presently Athole surprised them by looking up from the paper he was glancing over, and saying,—

"Rodney, you were right; our acquaintances of this morning are evidently the people you were speaking about. See here, in the visitors' list, is the announcement of the arrival of Mrs. David Grace, of Regent's Park, with the three Misses Grace, her nieces. They are staying at Jasmine Lodge; that must be that pretty place near the Britannia Pier."

Meanwhile, at Jasmine Lodge the girls, in their own sitting-room, were discussing the events of the morning with equal interest. Only Liv looked glum; she had stumbled and broken one of the ribs of her pretty white sunshade; and in opening it to show her sisters she had the misfortune to knock over a gilt timepiece, and break the glass shade and one of the glass ornaments.

The girls looked from one to another mute with dismay—Liv positively turned pale. No one had heard the crash, so they were left alone to settle how to repair the damage. They had no money; what little their father could spare had already been expended on trifles for the toilet. True, there were their aunt's two sovereigns, but they felt they must be sacred.

Diana, as usual, took the management of the matter, ran down and told the landlady, showed her the extent of the damage, expressed regret, and promised it should be repaired at once. Then she went into the town, left the clock to be put right, and was told the expense would be ten shillings. She returned hot and worried; it seemed such a lot of money; how were they to get it without applying to their aunt, who had already conferred too many favours upon them? The only thing to be done, she decided, was to write home for the money.

The girls looked blue at this, and Ruth said, "I am sorry we must worry dear mother. Ten shillings now is as much to them as ten pounds at any other time; and it was so good of them to spare us. They must be at extra expense, too, to put people in our places."

Oh! I'd rather go singing in the streets than send home."

Madcap Livy immediately brightened up, clapped her hands, and danced round the room, saying, "Now I know what we can do, girls. To-night we'll put on our waterproof cloaks, mushroom hats and thick veils, and go out singing. A woman last night murdered 'Annie Laurie' outside the 'Star,' and got paid handsomely. No one would know us, and we can sing."

Her sisters were aghast at the proposition; it upset all their ideas of propriety; but she went on coaxing and reminded them how often they had sung for charity; and how, one snowy Christmas, they had gone with a party through Salisbury singing carols and got a pot of money to get the school children a Christmas-tree.

Half consenting, but far from convinced, they started for a drive, and got home about five. Then they read and sang to their aunt till eight, when she dismissed them, saying, "Tis a dismal evening, my dears; I fancy we shall have rain soon. If you venture out you must not stay long, but get a good night's rest. I want to take you to Lowestoft to-morrow."

The girls said good-night, and went to their own room. Livy at once said she was getting herself up as a street minstrel; and if they would not go with her she decided to go alone, as she had done the damage, and must pay the penalty. Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes shone like stars; she had twisted all her wealth of flaxen hair under her old-fashioned hat, tied on a gossamer veil, and shrouded her pretty figure in an ugly grey cloak. So complete was the change in her that her sisters decided no one could recognise her; and not liking her to go alone, and feeling just in the mood for the fun, they followed her lead—with fear and trembling, 'tis true—but she was satisfied.

When they went out they found a slow, soft rain falling. It was a dark night, too, and everything seemed to help their concealment. They hurried along the Parade, keeping close together till they reached the Hall Quay, where, at the south-east corner, stands the Star Hotel, which was brilliantly lighted in every part, and the balcony leading from the Nelson room was crowded with smokers; many loungers, too, stood about the entrance.

"Now is our time," said Livy, excitedly. They came to a standstill just out of the light where the shadows hid them, and were silent for a moment. Then of her own free will Livy broke into song—her high clear notes cutting the air sharply like a peal of bells—singing "Robin Adair."

There was a movement among the crowd on the balcony; three men bent over and clapped delightedly. It was a real treat to hear such sweet voices singing with such rare training and true taste. A crowd began to collect, and money poured upon them from all sides, for English folks love music, let foreigners say what they will to the contrary. Then Ruth took her courage in both hands and sang a new song her aunt had given her, "Down the long avenue." Her deep musical notes were heard with amazement; the crowd thickened, money still came in unasked.

Then Di felt it was her turn, so took heart and sang out cheerily, in her merriest manner, "The miller and the maid." It was a taking melody, and had humorous words, and was received with delight.

Three stalwart young giants elbowed their way to the fore, and asked for a trio; the girls complied, singing their father's favourite, "The meeting of the ships."

There was now a dense crowd; the girls' pockets were loaded, and they felt it was time to get home; but how were they to dodge the crowd, and reach home safely and unmolested?

(To be continued).

BEAR in mind the solemn and stupendous truth that you are preparing for eternity, and act in such a way that you may not fear to have the sunlight of eternity stream full upon all your finished deeds.

SNOWDROP'S FORTUNES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"From her Own Lips," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"A MIGHTY fine story, mate."

"A true one, though. I wish it could be told about me."

And the speaker looked round the meagrely-furnished tent, or rather hut, in which he and his chum had their abode, with a half sigh. He looked like a navvy, and was as tanned as any man in that rough settlement, yet his hands were lithe and thin, and would not lose their shape though he toiled with the pick and shovel, and carried loads, and did anything that the place offered to earn his daily bread.

For all their rough lives and rougher appearance both he and the man to whom he spoke were the sons of English gentlemen— young fellows with handsome homes and delicate womenkind belonging to them; spendthrifts both of them, they had left their own land with the last remnants of their money, and a notion that at the Antipodes they should find ready-made fortunes, and a life of ease and plenty to be had for nothing.

They had found their mistake, as many better men have done, and had had to learn how sweet the bread is that hard work provides. There was good stuff in them both, and they had resolved to see home no more till they could take an independence, or something like it, back with them. They had come together by accident, and were in some sort partners now at a little colony owned by the richest man in the neighbourhood; and it was of an unexampled slice of good luck that had recently fallen to him that they were talking.

Some eight years before—about the time that fate ended for ever all Lord Wrexham's worries, and finished the history of the little child who ran away from Wilder's End on such a curious errand—the owner of "Copper Lode Gully," situated on a range of hills to which no railway and scarcely any road at all had penetrated, had come to the place, and had speculated in a piece of land that no one else would buy. There was no sign of gold there, and gold was the loadstone that had attracted all the settlers to that part of Eastern Australia.

Some Welshman, with a yearning after his native hills, and association of the lofty Liverpool range with the crags and peaks at home, had named the settlement Llangollen, and it was proud to say that it held the very richest man in all that part of the country, if not the richest anywhere. He had a variety of names, this lucky man, whose barren venture had literally turned to gold in his hands, and whose copper mines were worth pretty well all the diggings put together, yielding ton after ton of virgin copper as fast as the lodes could be worked. He had come to the country with a very little money, a wife—a scared-looking woman—and two children, and he soon showed himself a strong-limbed, hard-working fellow. Some escapade or another gained him the name of "Dare Devil Dick," though why Dick in preference to any other name it would have puzzled the people of the new Llangollen to tell. He never said his name was Dick, or that it was not. But he accepted the cognomen thus bestowed upon him, and was henceforth known by it.

But when he had earned a little money, and the purchase of the dreary bit of land, in which his quick and perhaps educated eyes had seen the promise of the wealth that was underneath the surface, came to be considered, it was necessary for him to have a name. Even a bit of worthless hill-side could hardly be made over to "Dare Devil Dick," and he was asked what his name was.

"I haven't heard it for so long I've almost forgotten it," he said, with some hesitation. "Put down John Thompson."

So John Thompson was put down, and J. Thompson, Esq., had gone steadily on from that hour amassing wealth and increasing his work till he numbered more men in his employ than any mine-owner in Australia. He spent most of his time at the mines; but his wife and daughter (he had lost one child since he came into the country) were by no means always there. His neighbours had seen very little of them since their first rise in life. Before that the woman and the two children lived with him, and were no more regarded than any other of the goods and chattels belonging to the settlers.

Mrs. Thompson, or "Dick's Old Woman," as she was always called at first, was a somewhat slatternly person, ignorant and with small pretence to manners. But she was kind to the children, and did her best for them in the way of food and clothes. She had a curious air of having been frightened, or come through some great trouble; but neither she nor her husband ever spoke of their past experiences, and they worked on and made the most of things, till fortune's wheel turned suddenly, and they found themselves a great many removes above their fellows in the matter of money.

Then it occurred to John Thompson that his children would be the better for a little education, and his wife for some sort of refinement, and he sent them away to Sydney. Some step of the sort was necessary for the children, for the wild lawless life of a camp—and Llangollen was nothing more at that time—is not the best or purest atmosphere for girls, and the children were both of the gentler sex. One of them especially needed care—a delicate creature, who was at first believed to be deaf and dumb, but who gradually recovered her scattered wits and her speech when it was necessary in the fresh air and freedom of the out-door life.

She clung to her father with a loving tenderness that everyone admired, seeming rather to shrink from her mother's roughness; and indeed, Mrs. Thompson did not seem to care for her as much as the other one, who was rough and ready, and could give and take with anybody. The younger child seemed like a hot-house flower which has got amongst its stronger neighbours of the garden somehow. Such odd incongruities are often seen in the families of the lower classes, suggesting an admixture of gentle blood in some previous generation.

She resembled her parents in nothing save in the large dark eyes that were like them both, for the miner and his wife were a dark-eyed pair, and in the extreme good nature and unselfishness which were prominent characteristics in the manners of John Thompson. She was the only one left now; the more robust sister had been carried away in her first year at school by a fever; and Miss Thompson, as she was called now, was reported to be a paragon of learning and deportment—a creature fit to grace any nobleman's family.

And now it was rumoured in the camp that fortune had smiled on John Thompson once more, and that some rich relation in England had died intestate, and had left him an enormous fortune. The news had spread through the settlement like lightning, and with it a rumour that Mrs. and Miss Thompson were coming home to the house on the hill side, which had seemed to the lucky speculator when he built it a palatial residence not to be surpassed.

Bets ran high as to whether he would go to England and live, or whether he would remain in the colony and spend his money where he made it. And the two friends who were talking of him declared their conviction that he would do the latter.

"He may go to the old country," the one who had spoken first said. "But I don't think he'll stop there, if I measure him up aright, and I think I do. He will know he is utterly unfit for English society; he comes from the very dregs of the people, I am sure."

"He makes no secret of that," his friend said. "I have heard him tell of various ex-

periences when he and his family were on the verge of starvation, and I fancy a great deal through his own idleness. He has come through some great shock or trouble which has changed his nature. He said so one evening at Sandy Mackinnon's bar."

"Did he say what it was?"

"No, he only said it had turned his hair white like it is now in a few days, nothing more. He is not to be pumped, isn't friend John?"

"Nor his wife either."

"Not she; she was capable of answering questions with a broom handle before this refining process began. She is curiously altered; but to my thinking she was a happier woman when she was making damper in her husband's hut, and making clothes for her young ones out of whatever she could catch, than she is with all the shops in Sydney at her service, and as much money as she likes to spend."

"What's the girl like? have you seen her?"

"You have seen her yourself."

"Yes; an unkempt little savage running about here, with but small wits I fancy, and less speech. I have not set eyes on her since she was sent away to school, or whatever civilizing process she has undergone. Dick Darwin tells me she is a beauty, but Dick romances."

"He has not romanced in this instance; she is a beauty, and no mistake. I think I never saw such a lovely girl, and I have seen a few. A lady, and a refined one too. She startled me, I can tell you, when I saw her."

"Why?"

"I don't know; she seemed to belong to the old life somehow. The first glimpse of her face sent me back to Rotten-row, and the drive and lighted ball-rooms and the clubs, and all the loitering places of London. I don't often get the blues, but that girl gave them to me."

"Perhaps she is like some one."

"If she is I didn't recognise who. It wasn't that, it was something in her whole manner; she didn't seem to belong to Sydney-street, but the life that you and I remember so well."

"And which will be nothing but remembrance for ever, I am thinking. Don't talk of it, Gower; I hate to be reminded of it. There are times when I am blue, as you say—when I would give ten years of my life to touch a lady's hand again, as some one says with the same heartache. I don't like to be reminded that I am anything but Dick Randall, the digger man-of-all-work—anything you like out here in the Australian hills."

"Let's go and have a drink," was Mr. Gower's response to this speech of discontent; and the two emerged from their hut to find most of the camp at Mackinnon's bar liquoring up preparatory to turning in for the night. Talk ran high about John Thompson and his fortune. He had actually been discovered to be the heir to a long dormant title, so the story said. Whether that part of the intelligence was true no one quite knew. He had been there, and had received all congratulations addressed to him with a queer twinkle of his eye and a little laugh, and an expressed opinion that he should turn out to be king of England next, he had no doubt.

He was enjoying himself at this moment in the fashion that suited him best—by his own fireside—with his pipe and his wife and daughter by his side, the latter nestling close to him with her pretty head resting on his shoulder and her hand in his. She was talking of the good fortune that had come to him, and saying how glad she was of it.

"It's all along of you, my lass," he replied, stroking the soft silky hair, and looking down at her with fond pride. "Everything belonging to me has turned to gold since that day. You have brought a blessing, Nell, that's what you have."

"No, father; it has been your own industry and care, and the knowledge you brought with you about mines and things that have done it, not me."

John Thompson shook his head, and lifted her face and kissed it.

"It's my little lass and nothing else," he

said; "who'd have thought it all them years ago when—"

"Don't, father," interrupted his wife—she called him father, in the old-world simple fashion when they were alone. "You were never going to talk about that again, you know."

"No more I wasn't; you are right, wife. We have buried all that, put a big stone on it, and it's never to be raked up again, is it? We are the other side the water now, we are, and don't know any such place as that queer little hole. And Nell, here, is going to marry a lord, some day, and be a great lady, and all because she was fond of father in those old times, and didn't forget him."

"I never forgot you, father," the girl said, lovingly, "but I am not going to marry anybody, and there are no lords cut here in the hills."

"Ob, aren't there?" responded John Thompson, with a little laugh, "I think I could put my finger on half-a-dozen at least if I wanted them, but they leave their titles behind them when they come here to work, my lass; they'd find them rather in the way."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE years that have flown by since the wreck of the good ship *La République*, and the end that came so suddenly to all the perplexities and worries attendant on the existence of little Snowdrop have left their traces on a good many people, and closed for ever the earthly career of a few who have taken part in the life's drama in which she figured.

Lord Wrexham is an altered man. With the disappearance of the carking care that had been his portion for so long, and the lifting of the load of anxiety and remorse—for he was more weak than inhuman in the matter all through—have come fresh life; a new youth, as it were, full of energy and hope, though in appearance he has aged, and there are white hairs amongst the brown curls that still lie so thickly on his forehead.

Lady Wrexham has lost her languor and her irritability, and seems to have picked up a fresh youth as her daughter has grown up. Lady Laura is talked about as one of the leading beauties of the season, and she well deserved the title. Tall and queenly, and with the carriage of an empress, her dark beauty strikes every one that sees her, and her good qualities endear her to all who know her. Her parents may well be proud of her, and thankful that her future is so well assured. She is to make her curtsy at St. James's this season. Lord and Lady Wrexham have wisely deferred her presentation till now. A little delicacy made them dread the fatigues of a London season for her, and they are well rewarded by the bloom of health and strength which she has gained while other girls of her age have racketted themselves out in the glare and heat of West-end ball-rooms before they were old enough to appreciate or strong enough to enjoy them. Arthur Fortescue is still a man about town—a little less boyish and laughter-loving than of yore—and beginning to look as if he might really be the forty years old that he says he is, to the utter disbelief of his many young lady admirers, who have not yet lost hope that some time or other he may turn into that desirable article—a marrying man.

He is still on Lady Wrexham's visiting list. The past that threatened to make such a breach between them is all over, and no exposure of what was in its day a shameful secret can do either good or harm now. He admires Lady Laura very much, and some people think that his lordship will give his handsome daughter and her dowry to his old acquaintance. Mr. Fortescue and the young lady herself know better. The gentleman may be her father's friend, but he will never be her husband. If has any fancy at all he keeps it well to himself, and no one has any idea in what direction it lies.

He sometimes meets Job Potts and his wife in his wanderings about the country, for he

flits hither and thither as fancy dictates, and is fond of exploring old nooks and quiet corners that tourists have left alone. He has gone over every scene of that almost forgotten misery of his; he has seen the church where his fickle cousin gave herself to Rupert Carlyon, and found out there are people still there who remember that quiet marriage which all the village looked upon as a runaway match. He has visited the "Homeward Bound," where the lost child was born, and seen the grave where all his boyhood's hopes lay buried. Now that it is all no use he has every link of the chain that would have given Snowdrop her rightful position in his hand; and he wonders sometimes at the inscrutable ways of Providence, that seem to be so crooked and short-sighted to us ignorant mortals.

With Mr. and Mrs. Sayers the world has not gone so well. With their hold on Lord Wrexham their importance vanished; the lawyer has no longer the power to enforce obedience to his wishes from his lordship, and he has been pretty plainly told that any attempt at intimidation will be followed by a publication of the whole story of his share in what has gone by, that would hardly suit Mr. Sayers; for though it might tend to Lord Wrexham's disgrace, and make things awkward for his daughter's prospects, it would reveal things concerning him and his method of doing business that would lead to his being struck off the rolls in all probability; and as he is prospering in his business, and making money in spite of his lordship's succession, he deems it best to remain quiet, and wait for a further opportunity of getting into the magic circle of the upper ten.

He can still talk about "my friend Lord Wrexham," and Mrs. Sayers can tell of the glories of Overcliffe and the visit she paid there, but it will be the last as well as the first; and Lady Wrexham has not the slightest knowledge of the lawyer's wife if she ventures to bow to her, as she persistently does whenever they meet. Lady Wrexham has the credit of being the cleverest "short-sighted woman" in London. She can cut any one without the slightest apparent insult, and go her way as calmly as if the discomfited person were not fuming with rage within a yard or two of her.

Fortune has favoured Alfred Scrivener, and placed him once more in his old position. An old hand was wanted for a delicate case of investigation, and some one in authority suggested that the quick eye and the ready hand were available still, if they had not lost their power. So the ex-detective was sought out and communicated with, and acquitted himself so well in the matter entrusted to him that a very little while saw him emancipated from the thralldom of Mr. Sayers's service and reinstated in his former appointment.

Mr. Sayers threatened and grumbled, and declared he would do this and that if his clerk left him; but Alfred Scrivener silenced him by a few words which let him know that he had him in his power, and that the theft of the leaf of the register was no secret to him at least; and the lawyer just let him go in dumb astonishment and horror. The ailing wife was better; she would never be strong, the doctors said; but new hope and better nourishment, and a change of air worked wonders for her; and though always a creaking door, she would, in all probability, hang as long as was necessary for her children and her husband.

Of Bill Jones and his wife nothing had been heard for a long time; they went abroad somewhere and never came back, and Mr. Sayers came to think they were dead. Job Potts and his wife, and the faithful Jeremiah, he knew to be alive, and was disgusted at their prosperity and content. He would have liked to know that they were both dead, and, indeed, everybody else who had taken part in the history of the dead child, on whose life and prospects he had built such hopes.

Job was on the road still. An old showman of the itinerant class cannot give up his life

readily. If he came into a fortune that would make him independent. The chances are that he would only use it to make a more splendid exhibition of his show, whatever it might be, and when he had lost it all begin again with some tiny exhibition, and try his fate once more. Job's fortunes had sunk down very low indeed, after he heard of the loss of *La République* and the fate of his darling. The news had been conveyed to him by Arthur Fortescue, who had taken the trouble to hunt him up and carry it to him.

He found him in Cornwall, and doing very fairly with a respectable exhibition of the conjuring order, which could be made available for private entertainments as well as public performance; and he was touched by the unfeigned grief of the worthy pair at the news. Everything pointed to the fact that Snowdrop had been one of the little band of children that had gone down in the ill-fated ship, and Mr. Potts declared that he knew something had happened to his darling.

"I dreamed of her," he said; "she came to me all in white with gold about her, and told me she was going to be a great lady. All gold and diamonds she was, pretty dear, but my loving little darling for all that. I now know what it meant. She's found the Good Shepherd in earnest, she has, and she's safe; but it breaks my heart to think that I shall never see her again."

And honest Job laid his head on his performing table and wept in unavailing grief as he thought of the child he had lost, and the sweet face and pretty eyes he should never see again. In the same journey Mr. Fortescue made the acquaintance of Felton Somers. The showman told him of what had passed when the child was lost; and he called at the Vicarage and spent a pleasant hour with the brothers, who were both there as it happened.

"I suppose there is some wise purpose to be answered in all this that we do not understand," the Vicar said, when he had heard the story of the little girl's loss; "but it seems now like a tangled web suddenly cut and no purpose answered. Poor little one, I dare say she is spared a great deal of trouble and sorrow. She did not seem to be wanted in the world somehow."

"Except by those worthy people who are grieving for her loss," Mr. Fortescue said. "For her, and not for what she brought them, I am sure of that."

"They will have their reward yet," the large-hearted clergyman said. "I have often thought that if our police here had not been so lukewarm we might have traced the child for them, but I could not move them to action. They seemed to think that a showman's child was a matter of no moment, and that he would find her again at the next fair he went to. I must confess I had the same notion, and fancied that the child had been stolen from business motives."

"The motives were far deeper, I am afraid, but it is all over now; she will do neither harm nor good in this world more."

Somehow or other for all that he had heard and his dream combined—and he put great faith in the latter—Job Potts never quite believed in the story of Snowdrop's death. He did not doubt Mr. Fortescue's tale, but he caught at the hope, and took to fanning, that Snowdrop was not on board the ill-fated ship at all—she might be hidden away somewhere; and if she were—if the world held her at all—he should see her again some day. But proof came to him one day in a most unmistakable fashion. It was some four years after he had heard the news from Mr. Fortescue, and he and his wife had made a decided step upward in their professional career, some one who had seen what they could do had suggested they would be an acceptable addition to the amusements at the Crystal Palace on the day of a certain fête for the benefit of one of the many societies which patronize the Palace during the summer.

The fête had come and gone, and they had given so much satisfaction that they were

engaged again, and occupied a queer little pavilion in one of the galleries—all flags and gilt letters—descriptive of the wonders within. Here they performed, assisted by the wondering Jeremiah, at stated hours during the whole day, and reaped a very fair remuneration when all their expenses were paid. To their show came one day a little party of foreigners, before whom Job was not nearly so skilful as usual, and the sight of whom seemed to upset him strangely.

He got through his performance without any blunders, and earned the applause of the whole party; but to his wife he seemed to bungle strangely, and to be oddly agitated, and she thought he must surely be going mad when he went up to a lady after he had finished, and begged to be allowed to speak to her.

"I hope I don't offend," he said, humbly; "but this—where did you get it, ma'am? Will you tell me?"

The lady was young, dark-eyed, and handsome, well-dressed, and wore round her neck the locket that Snowdrop had given to Eugénie Ravelle. It was that erratic young lady herself—well and happily married now—and leaning on her husband's arm, who had confronted Job, and so startled him that he had hardly been able to get on with his business.

Her friends often asked her why she persisted in wearing such an odd-looking trinket, and she had always replied, jestingly, that she expected a romance to come out of it. And the romance was surely coming now. She did not speak sufficient English to reply herself; but Job had almost touched the locket in his excitement, and she understood perfectly what he meant.

"Tell him, Alphonse," she said, turning to her husband. "Oh dear, I hope he knows the poor little thing is drowned; I shall not like telling him that."

So the story was told of how she had known Snowdrop, and had actually seen her walk on board of *La République* at Havre, and how sorry she had been when she heard of the loss of the vessel. She offered to give the showman the locket back, but he begged her to keep it in memory of Snowdrop; and with a liberal douceur over and above the payment at the door the party left the pavilion, taking away the last hope that Job had entertained. He should never see his darling again—never look upon her grave even. But they took comfort, these humble folks, that clergymen hardly thought fit to sit amongst their congregations, and preached at others as though they were sinners past all hope of redemption.

"We shall see her again in the next world, if we don't in this," Job said, when the weary day came to an end, and they could talk about their lost darling. "She'll wait for us at the gate, you and me, and there'll be nothing to come between us there."

(To be continued.)

A LADY recently died at the advanced age of ninety. Her will contained a provision:—"I leave to my physician, whose enlightened care and wise prescriptions have made me live so long, all that is contained in the old oaken chest in my boudoir. The key of the chest will be found under the mattress of my bed." The heirs were much disturbed, for they foresaw a material diminution of their share of the property. The notary delivered to him the key of the chest. It was opened, and found to contain solely all the drugs and potions, still intact, which the worthy physician had given his patient for twenty years back.

A good story comes from Germany. A Yankee, guiltless of any tongue but his own, was haranguing on a platform a porter who was in the same predicament. An Englishman, seeing the expenditure of words with no corresponding result, offered his services as interpreter. "No, thank you, stranger," said the gentleman hailing from the land of the Stars and the Stripe; "I guess English is the language of the future, and he's got to understand it."

WHAT WOULD WE DO?

What would we do if no rain-drops fell
Cool from the clouds on high?
Wouldn't the flowers in garden and dell
Wither, and languish, and die?

Thus it is that the storm-clouds off
Over our lives must rise;
Thus it is that the tears must fall
Out of our burning eyes.

For they soften the depths of an aching heart
And a freshening dew to its soil impart,
Where the blossoms of love and trust can bloom
And scent our lives with their sweet perfume.

What what we do if no cold frosts spread
Over the earth's fair face?
Wouldn't the world be a pestilent den,
A festering, dreary place?

So it is that a chill must fall
Sometimes over our dreams,
Striking them down in their brightest bloom
In cruellest sport, it seems.

'Tis to kill the breath of the poisonous air
That often lurks in a flow'ret fair,
And 'tis kindest wisdom that sends the frost,
For it knows what our realized hope would cost.

What would we do if no night e'er came
With its cool and dusky air?
Wouldn't some eyes be dulled with pain
And dimmed by the sun's broad glare?

Thus it is that our lives oft seem
Shrouded in darkest night,
While the clouds lie heavy and dark about,
Hiding the sun's fair light.

But 'tis always done with a purpose wise,
And the clouds that darken life's summer skies
But soften the force of the sun's fierce glare
And temper the heat of the stifling air.

—K. C.

DREGS AND FROTH.

A STORY OF TO-DAY.

CHAPTER XXI. (continued.)

"A terrible accident that on the shore,
Owen, did you hear of it?"

The young farmer turned upon him sharply.
"No! Where?"

"Don't be alarmed. There was a man
drowned, a stranger from London, close to
your father's village."

"Poor man! Who be 'ee?"

"A stranger you never saw, Owen, and yet
he was your brother."

"From London! I know—Sir John Weeldon
—is 'un dead?"

The doctor nodded, and the farmer stood for
a while in silence, with an expression of awe and
wonder upon his solemn face. Then he said
slowly, "And her 'er seed 'im agin?"

"Yes, they took the body to your father's
cottage. I was there, and knowing who he
was, told them to do so."

"Hur niver saw 'um alive."

"No, he came to the village like a thief
in the night; put a letter on the table, and in the
morning they found him dead in the bay.
Your mother is sitting beside the body—
they can't get her away from it."

"Caan't get hur away from un!" repeated
Owen, full of pity; and asked, "is the auld
guy not there?"

"Yes," replied Dr. Carew; and Owen, pull-
ing down his shirt-sleeves, said, while button-
ing his wristbands:

"I must go 'way to 'un straight."

"The letter left on your mother's table con-
tained a cheque for five hundred pounds."

Owen opening his eyes wide with astonish-
ment, repeated incredulously, "Five hundred
pounds! surely, t'ere a great big fortun'
thaat!"

The doctor laughed. "You'll think less of
it by-and-bye, perhaps. But I must be going
Good-morning, Jenkins! I am riding back
to Mrs. Cochrane—or I should perhaps say
Weeldon—she's at your mother's. Shall I say
you are coming?"

"Aw! sur, I'm coming."

"And so is that which will make Owen
Jenkins the talk of all London, little as he
thinks it now," muttered the Doctor.

"Somethin' 'er frightened they cheedurn," said
Owen, by way of explanation. "'Tis a wasp
maybe."

It was not, however, a wasp, as the next
chapter will show.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOLIDAY MAKING.

"How merrily the live-long day
In brightly pastime fled away.
We roamed the woods, and climbed the hills;
With stone and turf we stum'd the rills.
We plucked wild fruit; made chains of flowers,
Oh! give me back those sunny hours."
DAVID C. GIBSON.

THE holiday party from that roomy, cup-
boarded, old-fashioned house on Ham Common
were in the highest spirits when they started
for Owen's farm in the hired wagonette.

The place they had made their headquarters
was a quiet little inn called King Arthur's
Arms, just outside a curious little village or
town within hearing of the heavy wash of the
sea. Some of the houses, built in zig-zag
layers, with roofs of yellow stone crop, and
whitewashed lintels and door-posts, had a
striking aspect. The scenery surrounding
them was romantically beautiful and deligh-
tfully varied; wood glens, deep with rock and
crag, grassy slopes and brawling brooks, cas-
cades and waterfalls, vast towering cliffs, and
patches of woodland of almost primitive wil-
dness. Magnificent subject-matter for the
camera of Charley and the sketch-book of
Ernest! And by the sea, what grandeur! The
long, dark, heavy swell and the mighty
surges that came thundering in upon the rocks,
wave following wave with ceaseless turbulence,
the stupendous jutting headlands resembling
in the twilight monstrous animals, and shat-
tered cliffs with isolated fragments worn by
the constant action of wind and water into
caverns and arches, and jagged spire-like peaks
—impressive past imagining.

They visited the scenes of Arthur's mighty
deeds, Camelford and Tretown, and Sloven's,
once Slaughter Bridge, and all that remains
of Tintagel Castle's grandeur and strength.
They enjoyed a succession of the most deli-
ghtful pic-nics, ran races, and danced and
laughed and chatted sportively; they read and
sang together in the open air; made sketches
and took photographs; rambled over the hills,
and explored the glens and valleys; climbed
cliffs and scrambled over boulders. It was
most exhilarating.

And what a world of ferns and mosses, and
trailing plants and sweet wild flowers they
discovered! And what a field it was for geo-
logical research! Never, surely, did such
happy young lover-husbands and lover-wives
enjoy themselves before! The memory of that
trip would, they all agreed, be something never
to be forgotten, something of lifelong sweet-
ness and endless enjoyment!

"If I should never have a holiday again,"
said Ernest, "I fancy I can be content so long
as I can look back and remember this one."

But the time flew so rapidly and all too
soon diminishing funds warned them that the
time of their return was near.

The morning selected for their trip to Owen's
Farm was a delightful one. The air was soft,
dry, and balmy; the sun shone brightly, the
drive was through the soft picturesque scenery.

The blue sky, the snow-white clouds, the low
soft murmur of the summer breeze, the
twittering of birds, the hum of insects, and
the perfect freedom of being able to do just
what whim or caprice of feeling of the mo-
ment might dictate without fear of over-
lookers was most enjoyable.

Charley, knowing the road, or professing to
know it, was coachman, and made sundry
mistakes which were fresh sources of fun and
laughter.

It was noon when they reached the boulder-
strewn moor, and drove more slowly amidst the
ferns, gorse and leather, until they saw the
ruined windmill standing like a grim old sentinel
over Owen's farm in the hollow at its feet.

"That must be the windmill we were told
to look out for," cried Ellen, excitedly.

"We're close to it now," said Ernest.

But no trace of a farm-house could Charley
discover as he stood up and, whip in hand,
looked anxiously round him.

"It's in a hollow somewhere," said Clara.

"But where?" asked perplexed Charley.

Just then the voice of children at play
reached them, and presently they saw the little
ones coming in full career towards them, hair
flying, pinafores fluttering, arms outstretched,
chasing a butterfly, so absorbed that they did
not perceive them until close upon them; and
then they stopped suddenly, terrified by the
unusual sight, and swooped down into the hel-
low where their nest was, like a pair of fright-
ened birds.

"I'll run after them," said Ernest.

"No, I will," said Ellen, "they'll be less
afraid of me."

So she did, and presently they heard a wild
cry coming up from the sandy gully under the
thick hedge-wood.

"Come along—come, along. Here it is—I
see it!"

Ernest and Clara followed, leaving Charley
to take care of the vehicle.

There was a tall thin old man on horseback,
with a grey beard and spectacles, talking to a
handsome young rustic, with broad shoulders
and a big deep chest—tall, stalwart, full of
health and strength, with jet black hair and
honest brown eyes, who was fastening the wrist-
band of his shirt.

"Is this Owen's Farm?" asked Ernest; and
before the doctor could reply Mary came fly-
ing out of the back door with a cry of joy, and
sprang into her brother's arms.

"Are you Owen, my sister's husband?"
asked Ellen.

And before Owen could reply Mary had
caught Ellen in her arms, and was kissing and
hugging her with affectionate delight.

"I be faine glad to see you all!" said Owen,
heartily shaking hands, first with one and then
with another, with a vigour which made them
wince.

The doctor, as he prepared to drive away,
cried:—"Well Jenkins—what am I to tell your
mother, now?"

"Why tell un sur, that I be comin still.
These be Polly's brother and sistens. Polly 'll
look after me. I shall soon be back again, my
dears. The old mawther's in trouble, my
brother's dead."

Clara and Ellen glanced at each other. They
had heard the news of the Alderman's death,
and had wondered in fun if their brother-in-
law were the lucky Jenkins.

"Sir John Weeldon! Is he dead!" cried
Mary, who, like her husband, was ignorant of
the fact.

"Oh, sir," cried Ellen, "Can you tell me
where his wife is—my sister?"

The doctor started, and instead of replying
asked with sudden excitement:

"Do I speak to Clara Grant?"

"That was my name, but I am married.
This is my husband, Mr. Ernest Benny!"

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed the doctor,
"what an extraordinary thing!"

"Your sister is at this moment with Owen's
mother, under the same roof with the dead body
of her husband. I am going to her now!"

And now with the goal in sight you would not have me linger by the way. You cannot imagine that Clara and Alice were long asunder after that. Ellen remained with her husband and sister at the farm. Clara and Ernest went on to the fishing village with Owen and the doctor, the latter telling them by the way Lady Weeldon's story, only omitting from delicacy the street singing, which Clara and Ernest themselves supplied, to take its place in the chain of incidents as a completing link.

"This mysterious death of the alderman and your extraordinary recovery ends happily," said the doctor, "a story so strange and melancholy that it seems more like the invention of a novelist than actual truth."

Presently he said: "The coroner's inquest attributes the death to accident. Sir John driving from home from a visit he paid me later in the evening drank, it appears, somewhat freely at dinner, and on his way to his inn at Wauceston got out of the chaise, and went down to the shore to look, as he said, at the sea by moonlight. The driver, a poor weak-minded, superstitious, ignorant fellow, heard a cry of terror coming from that direction soon after, was frightened, and drove alone. There was evidence of the alderman's having visited his parents' cottage after they were in bed, and without making his presence known. It was awfully dark on that part of the shore where his body was found; the cliff throws its deepest shadows there, and he may have easily missed his footing on one of the slippery stones in the little bay, which are so placed that they are sure to tempt a curious man. The body is to be buried at Wauceston on the day after to-morrow; the funeral is to be a perfectly private one, and very quiet, although I daresay many people will come in from all the surrounding parts to see it. He was a great man, you see, and the papers have set people talking about him. Half England is now talking about the rough young Cornish farmer, whom your sister, ma'am, has so luckily married."

Then the doctor was silent, for he began to think, as he looked into Clara's face and saw it grow alternately flushed and pale, and heard how tremulously she spoke, that the interview between the sisters would have to be most carefully arranged if he would escape a very agitating scene.

"I think," said he, "you had better remain on the top of the cliff with your husband while I go down into the village with Owen Jenkins, and break the news cautiously to your sister; she is not strong, and her nerves have been terribly tried."

In less than half an hour Clara and Alice were in each other's arms, weeping tears of the deepest joy and tenderness; sending up from their full hearts a rapturous *Te Deum* of pious gratitude to Heaven.

Acting upon the good old doctor's suggestion, they drove straight to Tregarthen Manor House, where Guinivere in her father's absence played the hostess, and entertained them right royally for the remainder of the week.

How the sisters, when they were alone together, told each her story to the other, and how they sat talking together far into the night; how Ernest and Miss Tregarthen found in their mutual love of art a bond of the warmest sympathy; and how he saw the pictures on her easel, and metaphorically sat at her feet most humbly and reverently, as one who had not essayed her ambitious flights into the realms of glory, can be easily conceived.

How Alice heard of her mother's death, and how she went to London with Ernest and Clara to meet her husband's lawyers, and there to be found by her long-lost father, is not more difficult to imagine; nor how, bit by bit, they traced out the late alderman's treacherous scheme for keeping them asunder. Clara's letters were locked up with his private papers.

All these things are done rapidly soon after they laid the body of Sir John Jenkins, alias Weeldon, in his native earth and close beside the grave of his grandfather—the "unlucky un"—whose name was Jack.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WHAT SOCIETY AND THE NEWSPAPERS SAID.

"A rarer man could not be found
As this on earth to dwell,
For hee in virtues all, but most
In wisdom did excell."

Obituary Poem by John Johnson,
Student in Philosophie (1635).

WHEN the news of Sir John's mysterious and terrible death reached London obituary notices, paragraphs, and leaders were in all the daily and weekly newspapers. He was held up to public admiration as a man of the most honourable character and blameless life, a good man, and a great one; whose humble origin reflected the noblest glory upon his memory; a memory which would in the future be inspiration and encouragement to thousands, whereby some laudably ambitious lads might rise from the poverty to begin with to as lofty a position as that to which he lent dignity and lustre. The great City of London, it was said, could never cease to be proud of him; his philanthropic munificence made the poor rejoice, and drew down blessings on his head. He was most liberal as a patron of art, science, and literature; the grandest productions of modern art adorned his magnificent mansion, which also possessed one of the finest of modern libraries; and men of eminence in every branch of learning and advancement were always his most honoured and welcome guests. He was never cowardly enough to ignore his lowly origin, of which, taken in conjunction with the high position he attained, he was, as he had a right to be, justly proud.

The Liberal and Radical papers spoke of him as a man of advanced politics, "thoroughly earnest in repudiating everything that bore within it the taint of Toryism;" a man of business, "a man of the people, a man who, like Shakespeare, he knew 'little Latin and less Greek;' like him, also, knew uncommonly well how to do without them. If he did not acquire knowledge at school he acquired wisdom in life, and in his youth escaped all the pernicious ecclesiastical and political teaching by which so many are misdirected."

The Tory and Conservative papers spoke of "the late Sir John Weeldon, M.P., Alderman and Sheriff of the City of London," as a gentleman whose political views were extreme, although there was every reason for believing that he was as sincere in expressing as he was zealous in advocating them. "Still," as one said, "it could hardly be expected that any one who began life as an errand boy in a small shop, and had since devoted all his time to trade, could have those advantages which are derived from a classical or liberal education, or command that leisure for study which was essential to the acquirement of just and brave political views."

The Scotch papers, prying more curiously into the late alderman's private affairs, spoke of "the terrible domestic calamity which so crushingly overwhelmed him about a year ago, when he was compelled to put away his wife, a beautiful and most amiable woman, to whom he was devotedly attached;" and referred to "the curious fact that since Sir John Weeldon's death it had transpired that his real name (abandoned for some reasons of a private nature) was Jenkins."

The *Illustrated London News* informed us that the bulk of the late alderman's vast wealth would go to a young cottage-farmer in Cornwall, who, a few days before he heard of his death, had not been aware of his brother's existence.

A Sunday sporting paper—which made sport of everything private or public, sacred or secular, tragic or treasonable—said in its flippant slangy way, "The late Sir Jack Weeldon was emphatically a brick; but even aldermen are human, and no amount of turtle-taking will bestow immortality. He was Weeldon, and his work was 'weel' done, whether it was public or private, commercial or political, but he was not himself real Weeldon; for it is said that his real name—although, despite the

M.P. after his name, he never was connected with the *Morning Post*—was Jenkins."

Society—high and low—talked of the alderman's death. Lady Mary Greville was shocked and disappointed. In her ladyship's secret heart she had built up many an aerial castle upon the ambition and wealth of Sir John Weeldon. She never believed that his sickly delicate wife would live long; she quite thought that Lady Weeldon would die in the mad-house; and, lately, since a divorce had been talked about, she had seen herself approaching rapidly to the time when her slender establishment and small house should find substitutes in the grander household and more stately mansion of a man who could, of course, never be her ladyship's equal, although he might on certain carefully secured conditions be her ladyship's husband.

She felt the alderman's death bitterly, poor creature. In fact, she was so filled with the bitterness of it that it ran over, and was bitterness of bitterness to the cook, housemaid, and boy in buttons for a long time after, as well as to her daughter Florence.

Ah! what a dreadful blow the death of such a man was to Lady Mary Greville. He was generous, so delicate-minded, so sympathizing. It would be hard indeed to live without him upon such a scanty private income as her ladyship possessed.

Captain Montague Greville saw the record of this "Fatal Accident to Sir John Weeldon" in the *Daily Telegraph*, and in the same paper also glanced over a long leading article on fatal seaside accidents and great City aldermen of the past, with a few lines about Alderman Weeldon's death at the fag-end. He merely said,—

"So the devil has got his own again at last."

For the Captain had never had a good opinion of, or any respect for, the alderman since he knew the ground upon which the doctors and lawyers thought it right to imprison Lady Weeldon in a mad-house. Indeed, he went about at the time openly asserting that his wife was a perfectly sane woman until his mother interfered, and remonstrated with him for so cruelly slandering one of her ladyship's "most useful, faithful, and most respected friends." After that, when the alderman's wife was spoken of, the Captain would hold his tongue, or, at the worst, merely smile scornfully and shrug his shoulders.

Dick Benny read of Alderman Weeldon's death, and said in his best oratorical style to certain friends of his practising at the bar:

"So he's gone!—and a good job too! There will be one more bloated aristocrat the less to deal with when the people shall arise in their thousands to sweep the noxious vermin from the earth!"

Saying this he stood up proudly, chest thrown out, arm thrown out, the strong right hand open to clutch, waiting for the applause, very like an attitude and expression to the alderman on that night when you first made his acquaintance—after the charity dinner.

"The proud are always most provoked by pride."

Little old Weeldon talked over the sad event in the long dressing-room under the stage, and told the supers stories of the alderman's boyhood, when he was a little brown-faced, bare-footed fisher-boy, discontented with his lot, and full of wild childish schemes for its improvement.

Mr. James Grant had just packed his portmanteau for the trip into Cornwall when he heard of it, and said, "Alice will come forward now, and through her I may find out her sister." But the prospect of meeting the children he had been so long and wearisomely searching for was no longer a joyous one. A runaway wife, a street ballad-singer, were ideas which filled his dreams of their recovery with nightmare horrors. He at once desired to meet them, and dreaded the meeting.

Little Jimmy Benny, in that little wainscotted parlour over the top-sided little shop, read some of the press notices of Alderman

Weeldon's death to his wife Polly. And he afterwards cut them all out for very careful preservation, not because Sir John was great, or good, or wealthy, or distinguished, but because he had been his (little Jenny's) errand-boy.

And some of those to whom I have been telling this story spoke of his death in my presence, and discovered the lesson his life conveyed—a subject upon which I have really nothing to add, being no moralist, merely a story teller.

One said the great failure of his life, so far as it concerned himself, could be traced to his great pride and egotism.

Another said that the artificial nature of modern society, creating false distinctions and setting up hollow shams for serious worship, was more responsible for that failure than the alderman himself was. The poor wretch was really not so very far from being a decent fellow.

Another said the cause of failure was the man's wealth and nominal honours, "casting a cruel sunshine on a fool," heating and expanding his pride beyond all reasonable proportions.

Another said—and Dr. Carew quite agreed with him—"nonsense." And he offered to prove that money stimulated the moral energies of the heart, enlarged the affections, developed generosity, increased the strength of our domestic ties, enlarged the bonds of friendship and patriotism, and rendered those of love more sweetly tender and powerful. He gave, as an illustration of all this, the case of Owen Jenkins, who, from the very drags, was elevated to sudden wealth and honour.

Upon this I had my say. I told them that, in my opinion, it was all very like something I had read of in a book. A tourist arriving at a Swedish inn found written on its walls by some former traveller these words, "You will find at Trollhätte excellent bread and wine, provided you bring them with you."

After we had laughed at this another friend—the fifth, a lady—said she thought the man's death was a true type of his life. Under the influence of feelings which were perfectly natural, and, to a large extent, admirable, he took a false step in the dark, where there was no sound foothold for the happiness, comfort, or pleasure—in other words, he set up the dictates of his ambition against the impulses of his heart, and reaped the usual consequences.

They each tried to put him or herself in the alderman's place, and say what each would have been therein; whereupon, assuming an oracular air, I quoted epigrammatic Martial to them, saying, "Often art thou accustomed, Priscus, to ask me what kind of a man I should be were I to become rich, great, and powerful. Thinkest thou, my friend, that anyone can tell what his future conduct would be under such circumstances? Tell me, now, if thou wert changed into a lion, what kind of a lion would'st thou be?"

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

It is fashion to pause in their tasks while the years go by until they take a final peep at the characters that for so many weeks have been to them like living creatures. I follow it.

In the churchyard at Wauceston, under the tomb of Sir John Jenkins, rest the ashes of his mother and father. Poor old Bess never ceased to grieve for her favourite son with a pure unselfish love which had no touch of coarseness in it, rude and rough as the old dame was. It was her greatest satisfaction to the last to sit in the chimney-corner of her son's kitchen, smoking a pipe, and talking about her little Jacky who died so great and rich; while the old man, her husband, grumbled and muttered over his cider, "An' never kem nigh un for forty year."

Owen, after his parents' deaths, joined the Bennys in Australia, where his boys and girls promise to rank as highly with the foremost

of its colonists as he ranks with the largest, most wealthy and flourishing of farmers, his estate being quite a little country, and he its monarch, beloved and respected by all.

Ernest Benny and Clara still occupy the cupboardy old house on Ham Common, and with them live Mr. James Grant and Alice. Ernest has abandoned drawing on wood, and become a painter of no mean capacity. He doesn't always sell the works he exhibits—who does, now-a-days?—but he never wants money. That is no great evil, and he works none the less persistently, strives none the less ambitiously, and reverently does honour to his art by never prostituting it to mean and ignoble uses.

Dick Benny, upon whom Owen settled a small income, has improved wonderfully. He has grown sober and steady, taken to self education, is the presiding deity of a hall supported by free-thinkers, lectures blasphemously all over the country, and is consequently likely to be elected M.P. for Leathershampton.

He dresses like a gentleman, and if he is a little at sea about the pronunciation of certain words, clips the Queen's English without compunction, and makes the use of poor letter H very obscure and uncertain. He has great facility of speech, unshaken confidence in his powers of sneering at and ridiculing opponents, commands ideas and words cleverly, and is particularly well-read in every author who advocates his own views of politics and religion, and in no others.

Florence Greville remains unmarried. The sole end and purpose of her being is thus unfulfilled. Fashionable life has grown very monotonous and dreary to her; she might as well be dead, and she often wishes she were.

Lady Mary Greville is poorer and far more wretched than she was; she has lost calm control and grown irritable and peevish, poor thing!

Sitting peaceful and at ease with her darling husband in his studio, Clara was talking of Charlie Church and his wife one day, when they came to them a-visiting with their last—the sixth—new baby.

Ellen took Clara aside. She placed in her hands a newspaper paragraph and whispered in her ear:

"My darling, you are terribly avenged."

Captain Montague Greville and his wife were in the Divorce Court.

[THE END.]

TO THE WORLD GUILTY.

CHAPTER XIX. (continued).

Lord Lochisla and his young companion returned to the assembly rooms, and she resigned her to the Austrian ambassador, to whom she was engaged to dance.

She scarcely saw him again, save for a moment, to say good-bye, as the Duke of Merivale was taking her to her carriage; and Hyacinth felt as if she was going to prison when the door was closed on her and left her alone with her cousins. For both were silent. Gwendolen resented Hazlemere's desertion of her; and Louis's heart was full of bitter thoughts, in which Lochisla bore a prominent part. Hyacinth, knowing what held both her cousins speechless, was not likely to commence conversation. Poor child! she felt as little like a triumphant belle as possible. Her heart was bleeding for the man who sat opposite to her; every fibre in her frame was shrinking from him; she felt that she herself—although in perfect innocence—had proved an apple of discord. Why had Heaven endowed her so plentifully with gifts that please men? Why was she not plain or only ordinarily pretty, and ordinary in every way? But, ah! she was the dearer to Lochisla for these gifts; would he have loved her if she had been different?

Yet she was able, when they separated for their several apartments, to go up to Louis for

the usual kiss, and he looked down into the sweet face with a remorseful pang in his heart.

"Hyacinth, dear, forgive me. I ought to have told you how glad I was to see your success to-night; it was nothing you had done or said that vexed me and made me silent on the way home."

"You are sure of that, Louis?" How could she help looking so bewitching when she lifted her large eyes full of sorrowful wistfulness.

"Quite sure, dear; don't you believe me?"

"Yes," she even smiled a little; "you are always truthful, Louis."

"Would that all men were!"

But for a fierce effort those passionate words had passed his lips; but he checked them, and lightly kissing his cousin's forehead, turned away.

And she, dismissing her maid when her ball dress was removed, lay down on a couch, wrapped in a loose dressing-robe, and stared with bright tearless eyes at the dawning light, till gradually the tears came, and then, like a storm, a passion of sobs shook her from head to foot; and when that storm passed away at length, she felt as if she had just risen from a bed of long and painful illness. Heavy, indeed, was the penalty she paid for the winsome beauty that made so many hearts beat faster, and the "tender grace" that gave to every word and look a charm all its own. And amid her grief rose ever the perplexing question—not linked with any distrust of Errol Cameron, but not to be put aside—Why had he revealed to her this truth that could only destroy her peace? Little did she dream how and when that question would be answered.

CHAPTER XX.

A MYSTERIOUS JOURNEY.

"Come and dine with me this evening, Lochisla," said Lord Belmont, a day or two after the Embassy ball, meeting the Earl in Pall Mall.

"I should be happy, Belmont, but I shall be out of town on business till to-morrow night."

"Peste! Well, then, the invitation must stand for the very first leisure you have. By Jove, *mon cher*, how all the fellows rave about Miss Vernon. Hazlemere has completely thrown over Miss Stanhope in favour of her cousin, and Merivale can talk of nothing and nobody else."

Lochisla shrugged his shoulders, laughed, and passed on.

Two hours later the Earl was at the Midland terminus, and took a single first-class ticket for Braybrooke, a market town of some importance in Derbyshire.

As he entered the carriage a man at the other end dropped a newspaper he was reading, and the Earl saw Lord Alfred Fitzalan.

"Well met, my lord," he said, without a change of feature, save an expression of pleasurable surprise.

"Whither away? I might retort," returned his lordship, laughing.

"I am going to Derby to see my old uncle, who has a place near there, and is—so they telegraph—dangerously ill. Shall we be companions for long?"

"I am sorry to say no. I am only going as far as L—."

Lord Alfred nodded. "Pretty place," said he, a little—a very little—silly.

"You know it?" said Lochisla, who had never seen the place in his life.

"Ye-es, been to dine there two or three times with a fellow—charming villas about!"

Lochisla laughed.

"Very charming," he assented, and then rather quickly changed the subject, which convinced Lord Alfred of the truth of his conjecture; but he made no further allusion to the villas, and the two men talked of general subjects till the train stopped at L—, when the Earl alighted.

Lord Alfred sat back in his seat and laughed.

"So ho, my dear fellow! a pretty little villa! Well, there is a bit of news to flavour one's Habana after dinner at the club."

But Lord Lochisla's conduct hardly squared with Lord Alfred's view of the question.

That young nobleman was apostrophised mentally by the sometime Uhlan leader as a "gossiping fool," with a condemnatory prefix which need not be more particularly specified, and the Earl entered the booking-office, ascertained when the next train for Braybrooke stopped at L—, and went into the waiting-room to wait.

"A fortunate assumption of the young fool," he said to himself, as he paced up and down the narrow limits of the room. "She will believe no such wrong of me; and what can it harm me that the *beau monde* should enjoy a bit of talk about my supposed peccadilloes?"

The train came up in due course—that is, in another two hours—and Lord Lochisla proceeded on his way to Braybrooke. At this place he seemed at home, though many years must have elapsed since he last saw it. He turned straight out of the station to the right, out through various bye-streets, and at length entered a long country road, along which he proceeded nearly a mile, when he paused at the gate of a comfortable-looking country house, standing in a small garden, and backed by large masses of trees.

Lochisla opened the little gate, walked up to the house-door, and knocked.

A neat-looking housemaid answered the summons.

"Is Dr. Brandon within?" asked the Earl.

"Yes sir—what name, please sir?"

"Say only that a gentleman wishes to speak to him."

The servant opened an adjacent door, ushered the visitor into a sort of parlour, and departed.

In a few moments there was a step outside, the door opened, and a fine-looking man of about fifty-five entered the room, paused a moment, and then held out his hand with the delighted, but low-spoken exclamation—"Lord Lochisla! I am pleased to see you!"

"Were you doubtful of my identity, Dr. Brandon?"

Not I. I knew you at once, though it is so many years since I saw you. Did you come purely on business, or partly to honour me with a look?"

"For both motives, doctor, though I cannot stop very long."

"There is not much to tell," said the doctor—growing grave at once—"the same as usual—no change at all; but I suppose you would like to see, presently, when it grows dark. Meanwhile, will you dine with me? I am quite alone, and no one shall wait, and of course as to names I am mum. In addition, my parlour-maid is about as stupid as a girl can be, and I don't think would be able to swear to even such a handsome fellow as you are a week hence!"

"Then I will accept your invitation," said the Earl, smiling, and he followed his host from the room.

Later in the evening—after dinner—when it fell dark, the doctor rose.

"Would you like to come now?" he said; "no one will meet us in the covered way, and I will take you round where you went before."

The Earl bowed, and Dr. Brandon led the way down a back staircase, and through a door that opened into a long passage, dimly lighted, that seemed to pass under the garden, and finally both men disappeared through a strong oak iron-clamped door at the further end.

"Hyacinth," said Gwendolen, a day or two later, coming into the drawing-room from a shopping expedition, "have you heard the scandal that is going about?"

Hyacinth dropped her hands from the piano keys and looked up.

"What scandal, Gwendie? There are so many."

"About Lochisla."

"Well, what is it?"

"That he has a villa at L—."

"Ah! I wonder that was not said earlier. Who told you, and who told your informant?"

"Clarice Loring told me. I met her at Swan and Edgar's; and they heard it from Mrs. Sandon. Her husband heard it at the club."

"How far are you going, Gwendie, before you reach the root of the matter? I suppose Count Cameron did not tell 'the club' himself, did he?"

"You are always sarcastic, Hyacinth. Why should it not be true?"

"Why should I not have been playing Chopin when you came in just now, Gwendie? Whether I was or not is a matter of fact. A thing is not proved because it might have been."

"No; but, Hyacinth, Lord Alfred Fitzalan was in the train with Lochisla, and saw him get out at L—."

Very well; suppose all this true, what then?"

"But, Hyacinth, do you believe it?"

"Believe it!" The girl counted on her fingers. "Clarice Loring, Helen Sandon, Mr. Sandon, 'the club' (a vague entity!), Lord Alfred Fitzalan. The story has come through five people. I am not so easy of belief, Gwendie."

"It is very likely—why not?" said Gwendolen, flushing. "What more evidence could you have, unless you ask Lochisla the question?"

"You talk nonsense, Gwendie," said Hyacinth, hastily; "and what is it all to me? He does me no wrong."

"What!" said Gwendolen, her heart giving a glad bound at what she read as a renewed assurance of Hyacinth's indifference to Errol Cameron as a lover; "would you not be grieved to know such a thing true of him?"

"Such a thing," repeated Hyacinth, half laughing; "what everybody does. Why, Gwendie, were you born in Arcadia?"

"Ah," said Gwendolen, in a low voice, "your love has no jealousy in it, or you would feel differently."

"And you," said Hyacinth, coolly, though she grew white with suppressed passion, "have jealousy without love."

"Aye; how dare he—how dare he!"

Gwendolen turned away, muttering those words to herself; and Hyacinth commenced again at the point where she had been interrupted. The story about Lochisla would not have cost her a second thought on its own account. Wherever the earl went, whatever he did, Hyacinth would not have dreamed of doubting his faith to herself; and the only idea that troubled her was that Lochisla might imagine she, even for a moment, doubted him. She had no sort of curiosity about his proceedings; most of her replies to Gwendolen, though calculated and intended to mislead with regard to her feelings, contained no more than the absolute truth. Absolute confidence has no more fear or jealousy than indifference, only in the careless. "If it be true, what is it to me?" Did Hyacinth utter untruth?

Gwendolen continued to pace the floor for some moments, still muttering to herself, and glancing from time to time at Hyacinth with a triumphant look. Presently she quitted the room, and had hardly reached her own boudoir when Hyacinth was once more interrupted, this time by the announcement of Mrs. Sandon, who, rushing past the servant, danced up to Hyacinth and clasped both the girl's hands in her own.

"Just the person I wanted!" she cried. "Come into luncheon and let's go somewhere and have some fun afterwards; no excuses—come on."

"You are very kind—I shall be very happy."

"Pop on your hat, then, and come!"

And Hyacinth, never sorry now, after her enlightenment about Louis, to quit the house gladly assented; and merely telling Miss Philippa where she was going, speedily rejoined Mrs. Sandon in the drawing-room.

"I am not going to let you off till late," said Helen, laughing, as the two ladies took their seats in her carriage. "Tis a lovely day, we might drive down to Richmond after luncheon if some one—some nice fellow—will drop in to accompany us. Home, John. By the way, my dear, have you heard the story about the Count?"

"Yes, from Gwendolen," said Hyacinth, indifferently.

"You don't believe it?"

"It is nothing to me."

Helen looked puzzled. "Well, well," she began, then broke off suddenly. "There is Lochisla, how delightful! he shall come in to luncheon."

The Earl had just parted from an acquaintance; and as he turned to resume his way he saw the carriage, and lifting his hat bowed and paused, as the coachman drew up.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Mrs. Sandon," he said, shaking hands with her first and then with Hyacinth.

"On both sides, my lord!" cried the lively lady. "Get in, please, and come to luncheon; don't deny me—you can't have any other engagement. Hyacinth and I are going to enjoy ourselves this afternoon, and you can too, if you will be amenable."

"Madame, I know not how I should defend my entrenchments, even if I wished to do so; it was indeed a lucky star that led me this way to day."

"For us as well as for you," returned Helen, as Lochisla stepped into the carriage; and as it drove off she added: "pray suggest some way of spending the afternoon."

"Nay, I am at your service."

"Very well, I tell you to make suggestions."

Lochisla bowed. "Richmond?—the Row?—the Horticultural—"

"Hyacinth," said Mrs. Sandon, "what say you?"

Hyacinth voted for Richmond.

"Delicious!" said Mrs. Sandon; "we will have the high phaeton, and you will drive us, Lord Lochisla. Nap is a famous stepper, but you could drive a horse fresh from the prairies. We will go to the Star and Garter, and if somebody else drops in we shall just be four."

No one dropped in during luncheon, and while Mrs. Sandon ran off to don her out-door attire Hyacinth and Lochisla were left alone in the drawing-room.

The girl was sitting on a lounge near the window; the earl put down a photograph at which he had been looking, and crossing the room sat down by her side, and laid his hand on hers. She looked up quickly to meet his searching gaze.

"What is it, Errol?" she said, involuntarily.

"Hyacinth," speaking softly, and still looking into her eyes, "you trust me fully; you have not even a momentary doubt of me?"

"Why do you ask me such a question, Errol?" The colour rushed to her face; there was bitter pain in her voice.

"Forgive me, dear; you have heard, then, a foolish rumour concerning me?"

"Yes. Oh, Errol, you could not think I believed it!"

"My child, no! but yet the story might have troubled you. It is not your faith I doubt, my Hyacinth, but why should I be immaculate? Have I pained you?"

"No, Errol, you know the world, I am so young; but you do not think now that I, even for one second, lost my perfect faith in you, or was the least troubled or perplexed?"

"No, heart's dearest." He kissed her hand smiling, and added,—

"My real business, you know, was not at L—. I never saw the place before."

Hyacinth interrupted him. "I do not ask to know your business, Errol."

"Well, well, there is still a mystery for your trust, my Hyacinth; but, in truth, it was to foil Fitzalan that I got out at L—. I had no intention he should know my real destination. Hence my name is taken in vain; but that is

less than nothing to me. Here comes our hostess."

He rose as he spoke; but the touch on the door was not Helen's, but that of a footman, who, throwing open the portal, announced "Mr. Hazlemere."

Hyacinth's heart sank like lead. From that moment she wished Richmond at the Antipodes. Hazlemere would be asked to join the party, and she would have to sit by his side.

And of course this came to pass. Mrs. Sandon descended, radiant, to the drawing-room, and told Hazlemere that he was just in time. To decline a drive to Richmond with Hyacinth Vernon by his side would have been the act of a martyr, and Hazlemere saw no reason for assuming that role. He joyfully accepted the invitation; and so, in twenty minutes more the dashing phaeton drove off from Mrs. Sandon's door, that lady seated in the driving seat beside the handsome Earl of Lochisla, while Hazlemere occupied Paradise, in the shape of the back seat, with Hyacinth Vernon.

CHAPTER XXI.

LOVED AND LOST.

Naturally to say that on the road to Richmond Hazlemere exerted himself to his utmost to charm his beautiful companion, and her unusual reserve rather fired him to further efforts than dampened his ardour. His immature affection for Gwendolen had vanished like a sickly dream. He marvelled, as he basked in this dazzling sunlight of Hyacinth Vernon's presence, that he could ever have been, even for one evening, captivated by her cousin.

With the egotism of a man in love he failed to read or misinterpreted the signs in Hyacinth's manner, which should have warned him.

Concurrent circumstances, too, seemed to favour the view which inclination led him to take. Mrs. Sandon surely wished to encourage his suit—had asked him to join the party with that object; and, in so doing, she must have some ground for believing that she would not offend Hyacinth. Lochisla certainly was not a rival, and as certainly no one else was. Hyacinth always treated all men alike, and for her cousin Louis manifestly had only a sister's affection. So Hazlemere deluded himself with wild hopes, and Hyacinth felt more and more as though she were deceiving him; and yet how could she enlighten him?

Perhaps only two of that party in the famous room at the Star and Garter that evening were happy; but Lochisla flirted with pretty Helen Sandon with the harmonious blending of the courtier's accomplished grace and the soldier's dashing *galanterie*, and Hyacinth's manner was an effectual mask to two of her companions. The third could not have been deceived, if even she had cared to try the experiment.

After dinner, and a little lounging about the terrace, Helen suggested a saunter in the park. My lady wished to usurp the society of the famous and attractive Earl of Lochisla; and a saunter in the park would offer facilities which were denied in the more circumscribed limits of the terrace. The proposition suited the earl also, who had his own reasons for wishing to throw Hyacinth and Hazlemere together as much as possible, and so played into Helen's hands. Hyacinth did not fail to see that Helen Sandon desired to keep Lochisla to herself, and doubtless had asked Hazlemere to join the party to provide a cavalier for Hyacinth. Nor did the girl grudge Helen the earl's society; but it seemed strange that he, who could so easily have foiled the lady's intentions, should chime in with them, and so practically force Hyacinth, for very pride's sake, to do the same, though he knew how she shrank from being alone with Hazlemere. But she did not, even by a glance, convey any reproach or appeal to the earl; and when her companion lingered and allowed Lochisla and Helen to go on ahead, she made no effort to quicken her steps, and exerted herself to keep

up the ball of conversation; but when, after pausing while Herbert gathered some ferns he wished to show her, she suddenly looked round and saw that Lochisla and Mrs. Sandon had disappeared, her heart gave a wild throb of fear, and her first instinct was to spring after them. But she did not follow it. It was a foolish instinct, she argued; Helen Sandon did not want her, and she could not, besides, leave her companion so abruptly—could not let him see that she feared him.

"Never mind the fern, Mr. Hazlemere," she called out, carelessly, "we shall lose the others if we linger so long."

A consummation devoutly to be wished, thought Mr. Hazlemere; and he replied:

"Never mind if we do, Miss Vernon; we all meet at the Star and Garter at nine, and we cannot easily lose that."

"I could," said Hyacinth, looking round the wilderness of trees among which they had wandered. "I do not know this place at all—and it is like a forest—there is no one to tell you the way."

"But I know it," said Hazlemere, coming to her side, "and it is not eight yet, Miss Vernon. See, is not this a lovely fern?"

"Yes—only I do not know much about ferns." She began to walk onwards; her heart was beating fast, but she added with a half smile:

"We must be careful of the time—we must not be late at the rendezvous."

"We are not very far from it," replied Hazlemere; "not half-an-hour's walk. Are you in such a hurry to return?"

There was a touch of reproach in his tone. Hyacinth answered quickly, "No, but it would be so easy to lose one's way here."

"As easy," said Hazlemere, in a low voice, "for me who know the park as for you who do not—for I am sorely tempted."

"Do not yield to the temptation then," said Hyacinth lightly, refusing to see in his words more than ordinary compliment.

"May I retort, Miss Vernon?"

"No," returned the girl, readily; "a gentleman may never retort on a lady."

"I am rebuked." Then his voice shook a little. He drew nearer to her, "may I ask a question?"

"If you like. I will not promise to answer it."

"I think you will." He stood still suddenly. Miss Vernon—Hyacinth—for pity's sake drop all joking. Let me speak what is in my heart."

"Ah!" the girl recoiled, with a cry of pain, putting out her hands. "No, no—say no more—for your own sake—for mine!"

"For both our sakes!" cried Hazlemere, passionately, "I must speak, and you will hear me. Call it madness—infatuation—to love you—it is neither. Ah, do not cover your face—do not shrink from me. Surely I am not deceived—surely I have some ground for hope?"

"None, none." She wrung her hands in agony. "Oh, you are miserably deceived indeed—but not by me—if you dream I can ever give you more than friendship. Hush! hear me one moment. I tried to warn you, and you would not see. I knew that you were learning to give me what I could never return, and I did all that lay in my power to undeceive you. I am so young; I may have led you all unconsciously into error, but I have not wilfully done so—Heaven be my witness—I have never trifled with you."

"Hyacinth," said the young man, almost wildly—and he clasped her hand in both his own—"why deny hope? Is not your heart free? Can you never learn to love me?"

"Never." Her voice was firm and clear now, though she looked at him through heavy burning tears. "I beseech you to waste no thought on me—to try to forget me."

"Forget you! forget to breathe, forget that the sun shines and the flowers bloom. Great Heaven! do women like you know half their power?"

Almost Lochisla's words. Hyacinth grew white as death, and her head drooped.

"Not now, not yet," she whispered, hoarsely "but in time you will learn to forget. Oh, you must believe me—you must not throw away a noble heart on barren ground."

"The ground shall be no more barren; I will sow the seed and reap the harvest."

"You cannot." She drew her hand from his clasp, and locked it tightly with the other.

"If you will not accept a cruel truth, I am conscience-clear. I have never deceived you; I do not deceive you now. I entreat you not to blind your own eyes; I shall never love you. I am young; but I know this. I would"—her voice faltered, she turned away in bitter pain and grief—"I would that I could have spared you such suffering."

Hazlemere did not answer. The blow was too sharp and terrible. He felt stunned and dazed; he had so buoyed himself up with hope; and now he knew, strive as he would to crush that knowledge, that all was lost. It seemed as though the sky were blotted out, and the sun had ceased to shine; and yet, as he walked on in gloomy silence by the girl's side, the sunlight was flicking through the green boughs, and the birds were murmuring softly in the leafy depths. Alas!

"How strikingly the course of nature tells By its light heed of human suffering That it was fashioned for a happier world."

Mechanically Hyacinth had turned towards the direction in which Richmond lay, and suddenly there was the sound of a quick light step among the long grass, and both started—Hyacinth with flushing brow and throbbing heart—for she knew the step, and stood still in the very agony of mingled dread and relief. In another moment a tall form flashed among the trees, and Lochisla stood before the truant. One glance, and he laid a gentle touch on Hazlemere's shoulder.

"Hazlemere, time wanes. I have left Mrs. Sandon at the hotel, and came out to look for you wanderers. Will you kindly join her, and I will follow with Hyacinth."

The young man coloured crimson, gave a quick look into the speaker's handsome face, and, hardly venturing a glance at Hyacinth, lowered his head without a word and strode away.

Then Lochisla turned to the girl. "My child!" he said softly, "heart's dearest."

But Hyacinth shrank from the outstretched hand—would not heed the tone, more pleading than caressing—and covering her face, burst into an agony of tears.

One moment the Earl paused—one moment he set his teeth in fierce pain, worse than rack or fire. Then he was at Hyacinth's side, and took both her hands in his, drawing them with gentle force from before her face.

"Do you reproach me," he said, almost in a whisper; "do you accuse me?"

The girl's head was bowed down; her burning forehead leaned on the hands that clasped hers; she answered low and falteringly,—

"Oh, Errol, you have been cruel—to him and to me!"

Lochisla grew pale—pale as ashes—to the very lips. He paused a second, gathering strength to speak. Then he said patiently,—

"Hyacinth, will you try to forgive me? If I could—if I dared tell you the truth—you would, I know, pardon the wrong."

But Hyacinth lifted her head quickly, and threw herself on her lover's breast, clinging to him convulsively.

"I was mad," she said; "I did not know what I said. Errol, Errol, forgive me. It is I who must ask pardon. Oh, how could I wound you, when I would have rather died."

"Hush thee, hush thee, my own dear love." Even the tender musical tones had at first no power to calm the tempest, as he folded the quivering form closely to him, and bent over the young face, lifted in such passionate pleading to his own. "You have done me no wrong, Hyacinth; but I have wronged you. So try to be calm, my child, and listen to me.



[LOVED AND LOST.]

Poor heart, throbbing with such bitter pain because, deeply wounded, it cried out against the hand that stabbed it. I deserved reproach. Hyacinth, you could not know. I did not dream your trust was gone, my child. Do not weep so. Indeed, indeed, the wrong has been mine."

"No, no!" That he should own himself wrong only added bitterness to her grief, yet she struggled for self-control. "Oh, Errol, when you stretched out your hand to me I shrank away. I have wounded you. Oh, if I could only blot out these moments!" She was shaken like a reed; the sensitive nature was writhing in torture.

"My child, my child!" whispered Lochisla, "rest thee in peace; those moments are blotted out. Do I not know this pure heart, that so bleeds with the thought of having a sorrow it had no power to avert? My darling, be just to thyself. Wilt thou give heed to me, Hyacinth?"

"Yes." The slight form was trembling still; but, under the magic influence of his voice and touch she was growing calmer, and now leaned her bright head against him like a weary child. "But you will not reproach yourself, Errol?"

"Dear one, Heaven reward your faith; and forgive me if, striving between two great evils, I have erred in choosing what I believed to be the lesser. It is true that for Hazlemere's sake I have stood between him and Gwendolen, and led him on to give to you a love that could never be repaid. I spoke no word to him. I simply gave him, as much as lay in my power, the opportunities he would fain have sought. How I have suffered in acting this part—in the wrong to him, to you—Heaven and my own soul only can tell. Wrong! Aye!—but the alternative! Hyacinth, you know I had not so dealt with you and with him if it had been possible in any other way to save him. To him this will be no life sorrow; few men bestow all that they have of love to give on one woman; and between his life and yours is no

true harmony. Could he have won your love he could not have kept it; and for the rest, your heart can have no self-reproach. I marked you, Hyacinth, even to-day, and saw how only Hazlemere's own devotion blinded him, else he who runneth might have read how little power he had over your thoughts. So you will forgive me, my darling—forgive me, though I may not tell you why I have made you weep, and led a brave true heart into error."

Hyacinth raised her head, and looked up to him through heavy tears.

"There has been no wrong—nothing to forgive Errol. I know that you have acted for the best. It was sheer pain that maddened me, and made me cry out. I did not think what I said; I scarcely knew how much my wild words meant. If I am pardoned—"

"Hush! so do I seal your lips against treason, sweetheart," and bending lower he pressed a long kiss on the sweet, tender mouth. Then, after a short silence, releasing her gently from his arms, he added, "Come, my child, let us join the others; you shall be by me this evening."

Hyacinth smiled up to him gratefully, and they walked on under the dark of the trees, saying little more as they went, and soon joined Mrs. Sandon and Hazlemere.

Helen Sandon had, of course, seen the moment Hazlemere entered her presence what had passed, but had too much tact and good feeling to seem aware of the fact. So soon as Lochisla and Hyacinth returned, she herself suggested in an off-hand manner that Miss Vernon should occupy the driving seat; and she cheerfully submitted to endure the company of perhaps the least agreeable being in existence—a rejected suitor.

No one was sorry when London was reached, and the carriage drew up before Mrs. Sandon's house in Great Stanhope-street. Hazlemere declined to enter, and bidding a hasty farewell he strode quickly away towards his chambers.

Hyacinth remained later, and Helen sent her

home in the brougham about twelve o'clock, Lochisla taking his departure at the same time.

"Poor Hazlemere!" said Helen, as she was bidding adieu to the Earl, "it will be a terrible blow to him!"

"Aye," returned Lochisla, gravely, "but time will soften the pain."

"It will need a long time—at least it would be so with me," said Helen, "if I were a man, and in love with Hyacinth Vernon. I thought she might have liked him."

"Did you?"

"You are oracular to night, my lord. Well, she is too good for him, certainly. Girls are strange enigmas."

A proposition Lochisla did not deny, and, bidding farewell, he departed.

"Yes," muttered Helen, "girls are enigmas, and so are men. How can she help being in love with Lochisla, and how can he remain obdurate? Is he? That is the question, as Hamlet said. It passes my wit. Surely he is not held by some stupid entanglement; he cannot have found any one to shine even as a star to the sun in comparison with that child."

And Lochisla had smiled to himself half-bitterly as he turned towards Piccadilly, for he knew why his hostess had spoken of Hazlemere; and then came the passionate, voiceless cry, "Will the day of reckoning never come; Shall I ever be free—free from dishonour, free to love? Oh! mother of God, for one hour even of oblivion!"

(To be continued.)

THERE can be no true friendship where there is no freedom. Friendship loves a free air, and will not be penned in strait and narrow enclosures. It will speak freely, and act so too, and take no ill where no ill is meant; nay, where it is, it will easily forgive, and forget, too, on small acknowledgments.



[“WILL YOU WEAR THAT BRACELET NIGHT AND DAY—NEVER TAKE IT OFF?”]

NOVELETTE.]

FRIEND AND BROTHER.

CHAPTER I. TEMPTED.

SCENE, a bedroom in one of the finest houses in Bombay. An officer stretched full length on a bed, with one leg supported on a kind of cradle, and looking as if it belonged to some one else. He looked up, as a friend came in at the open door, and nodded.

“So you’re off, and I am left behind. Good luck to you, though you don’t deserve it. I never wanted you before in my life, but now I shall miss you horribly. Don’t be flattered. If I could get about as usual, instead of lying here, a helpless log, I should want nothing and nobody, but under the present circumstances a dog is better than nothing, and you are better than nobody.” And with a smile Captain Dynevor stretched out his hand to his brother officer.

“You have Ponto, and I know you like him better than me,” rejoined Francis Dacre, as he gripped his friend’s hand with a warmth that belied his words.

“Of course I do. Just see to that confounded punkah before you go. When I am nearly suffocated it is sure to stand still; when I feel rather chilly it tries to blow me out of bed. And, I say, look out when you get to Southampton, for you will find all my people on the quay ready to embrace me. I bet you five shillings that Alice will throw her arms round your neck and give you a sisterly hug.”

“No objection. Drop them a line to tell them of your accident, and warn them that you are not coming.”

“Not I. If I put pen to paper, except for the purpose of signing a cheque, you may expect the world to come to an end. Hug them all round if you like, and then tell them afterwards that the real man’s in India, tied by the leg. There’s a cousin of mine, Madge Vivian, a deuced pretty girl when I left; you

will be down on your knees to her before a fortnight is over.”

“You forget that I shan’t know them.”

“Oh, hang it all! you will know them fast enough. Go and call; say that I sent you, and when they see you, with your ridiculous likeness to me, they will make no end of a fuss with you, swear that you will do very well instead of me, and end by liking you much the best of the two. Hand me that pipe, will you; this brute won’t draw.”

Captain Dacre gave the invalid an enormous hookah, instead of the small cherry-wood pipe he had been smoking, shook up his pillows, poured out a glass of iced lemonade, put the *Bombay Gazette* within reach, and then with a little nod and a kindly look from his blue eyes, which meant more than many a woman’s kiss, left the room, jumped into his carriage, which was waiting for him at the door, and drove rapidly to the quay. In a few minutes he was on board the *Hyena*. After taking possession of his cabin, and stowing away a few of his more valuable belongings, he returned to the deck, chose a favourable position for his lounging chair, and threw himself into it with a newspaper and a cigar.

As the roofs and towers of Bombay receded slowly from sight, and the forests of masts in the harbour became an indistinct cloud in the distance, a feeling of loss—of something missing—crept over him, involuntarily. He was alone, amongst a crowd of men and women, homeward bound. Each and all had probably some place, whether grand or mean, to call home, some friend to give a welcome, some face to smile into his or hers at the first step on shore. But he had none. No pulse would bound the quicker at the sound of his voice; no heart leap with joy at the sight of his handsome face. All the friends he had made in the world were left behind him in India; he must needs turn his back on them because he chose to call it pleasure to go to England for a year’s leave. What a fool he was, to be sure!

Looking back as far as memory could stretch,

he could only remember one person who had ever been fond of him, and that was a simple country woman, who lived in a Berkshire village. He did not even know her name: she was “Nurse” to him then, and he thought of her as “Nurse” to this day. She wore a large cap, and had a large apple-tree in her garden which bore the nicest apples that ever were tasted. These two small facts survived out of a chaos of forgotten things.

Surrounded by a buzz of conversation his tongue was silent, but his mind seemed as active as a grasshopper. He saw himself once more spending his holidays in a house in Park Lane, and suffering acutely from the consciousness that he was only tolerated out of deference to Lady Wolverton’s whim. Her sons, the young Ashleys, had taken every opportunity of snubbing the interloper; and he hated every stone of that house with the intense hatred of youth for any place in which it has been made to suffer. Sitting there under the wide-spread awning, puffing slowly at his cigar, with his straw hat pulled well down over his eyes, his cheeks flushed even now with the remembrance of all the bitterness of his boyhood. Girls had flirted with him for the sake of his honest blue eyes and winning smiles, but only one had been true to the waif and stray, and she had died in consumption, breathing his name in her last prayer.

On the eve of his departure for Sandhurst Lady Wolverton had sent for him to her boudoir. A handsome woman, with fierce black eyes and a scornful mouth, she stood by the mantelpiece, dressed gorgeously in velvet and lace, and told him very coldly that his only chance in life lay in hard work. If he passed his examinations creditably, she had interest enough with those in power to obtain a commission for him in one of the best regiments; and in the event of his success, a certain sum would be placed to his account in Messrs. Drummond and Co.’s bank, which would enable him to keep up his position as a gentleman.

"As to your future, it lies in your own hands. You have the face of the truest gentleman that ever lived," her hard voice trembled; "and if you live up to his standard your life will be a blessing to all who know you."

And then she did a thing that the proud Lady Wolverton had never done before—she threw herself upon his neck and kissed him again and again. The boy's heart was easily won; the first ray of tenderness melted its coating of ice, and throwing his arms round her, he forgave in one moment long years of coldness and neglect.

"I have tried to do my duty by you," she sobbed; "I have clothed and fed and educated you, as if you had been a boy of my own. For you I have been hated, suspected, and despised; but I have borne it all for conscience sake. Tell me, Frank, if I send for you when I am dying, you won't curse me? You won't drag me back from Heaven because of my sin towards you?"

She looked up into his face with passionate entreaty in her eyes, but before Frank could answer the door opened and Lord Wolverton came into the room. He thrust them apart, pushed the boy on to the landing, and told him curtly to leave the house. What passed between the husband and wife he never knew; but as he sat alone in the bedroom he had taken for that night in the Coburg Hotel, a note was brought to him from Lady Wolverton, containing a bank-note for fifty pounds and a slip of paper with the single word "Good-bye."

He began to find life a better thing than he had inclined to think it so soon as he joined the 100th K. D. Gs. His comrades took to him at once; and in Frederick Dynevor, a young fellow with a face as fair and as frank as his own, he found a special chum. The resemblance between the two men was so extraordinary that the Colonel vowed that he did not know "t'other from which," and often reprimanded Dynevor for a mistake committed by Dacre, and vice versa. Their brother-officers declared that they could never take their oath to either, unless he was made to sing, when they knew as a fact that the tenor was Frank and the bass Fred. Their nick-names in the regiment were in consequence "Tenor" and "Bass," subject to such variations as were suggested by the exuberant fancy of their comrades.

By the men on board the *Hyena* Dacre was generally addressed as Captain Dynevor, in consequence of the cabin having been taken by Fred before his accident; but he was too well accustomed to the mistake on shore to take much notice of it at sea.

All went well on the voyage. The heat was sometimes oppressive, but a kindly trade wind took pity on the *Hyena* in the Red Sea. Whilst the passengers on another vessel outward bound were panting for a breath of air, and the steam from her funnels went straight as a dart upwards to the burning sky, Francis Dacre had to hold on to his newspaper lest it should be blown away by a delicious breeze.

When they touched at Lisbon a young lady came on board, who seemed to bring in her train the whole personnel of the British Legation. The first secretary presented her with a bouquet of gardenias, the second was in despair till he found her a footstool, covered it with his delicate pocket handkerchief, and placed her dainty little feet upon it, whilst the third gave her a naughty French novel as a keepsake.

After a great deal of chatter, much laughter, and many shakes of the hands in repeated adieux, the polite trio took themselves off, the *Hyena* steamed slowly away down the lovely river, and the young lady was left to herself and her maid. A smile still twitched the corners of her mouth as, after giving a final wave of her handkerchief to those on shore, she settled down in her chair and threw a quiet look round at her companions. Her eyes danced merrily over a pair of faded spinsters simpering at a fierce old general who was making grotesque love to them both, to keep

himself in practice; they rested tenderly on a sickly child whose tired head was laid upon her mother's knee; but longest of all they lingered on the handsome face of a young man who, strange to say, was not then looking at her at all, as he leant against the bulwarks with a cigarette between his lips.

"Who is that gentleman over there in the brown coat?" she asked of a sailor who was stooping down over a coil of ropes close behind her.

"Captain Dynevor, mum."

"I thought so," with a satisfied smile.

"Please tell him that I want to speak to him."

The man crossed the deck, lunched Dacre on the arm, and delivered the young lady's message. A look of surprise came into the eyes which met here with an enquiring glance; then the cigarette was thrown away, and in another minute he was standing before her, his bright hair lured in the sun.

"Oh, Fred, I am so glad to see you. Welcome back, you dear old fellow!" she cried joyously, as she stretched out two little hands in eager greeting. "Don't you know me? What a joke! Why I should have known you anywhere!"

He looked down upon her lovely face with a great longing to appropriate the greeting as warmly as it was offered, but conscience made him answer tamely:

"Awfully sorry—pon my honour—"

"You don't know Madge Vivian? Well I never. Shake hands this moment, sir, or you will deserve to be sent straight back to India at once."

He did not require to be told twice; before he knew what he was doing the two small hands were clasped in his own.

"You are not one bit altered," and as she spoke she scanned his flushed face with a critical gaze, "only your voice is changed—it doesn't sound quite the same."

"Indeed you are making a mistake. I am not—Fred Dynevor."

"Then I am not Madge Vivian. Here, steward, please tell me what is this gentleman's name?"

The man looked from one to the other with a puzzled expression on his weather-beaten face. He thought the gentleman was up to 'a lark,' and wished to suppress his name. Scratching his head, he remained silent, with a small twinkle in his left eye.

"Well, what is it?" said Miss Vivian, imperiously.

"Captain Dynevor—leastways I believe so."

"There, I know it!" she exclaimed, triumphantly, as the steward walked off. "Now sit down—thank goodness there is a vacant seat—and try to make yourself agreeable." He hesitated. "Oh, if you don't want to be my cousin, you shan't," and she turned away with an offended air.

"I do want to be your cousin, Miss Vivian."

"Miss Vivian! For heaven's sake call me Madge; for I couldn't possibly frame my lips to call you Captain Dynevor."

"Don't," he said, with a smile which brightened his face with sudden sun shine. She thought he had grown handsomer than ever as she looked up at his sunburnt face from under her long lashes, and her heart warmed towards him with a pleasant recollection of a nascent flirtation which had promised to bud into premature maturity when she parted from Fred Dynevor, under the trees at Vivian Chase.

There had been many flirtations since then, but nevertheless she felt strongly disposed to pick up the thread of that childish one, as he stood by her side, his eyes fixed on her pretty face or graceful figure. They never strayed far from her, a fact of which she was quite conscious.

"I don't like to hold my tongue, and I am not fond of shouting, but I must do one or the other if you won't sit down," she presently remarked with a slight pout.

He sat down. Leaning forward he said,

gravely, "You won't believe what I say. But to set my conscience at rest, will you give me leave to be your cousin till we land at Southampton?"

"You ridiculous man! I give you leave to be Fred Dynevor for ever and for ever. There!"

"Evidently his head has been turned by a sunstroke," she said to herself. "And what a pity—such a good head as it is, too!"

"And now, my conscience being free, I am ready to be your slave as long as you will have me," and he settled down to the pleasant task before him, with a light heart.

"And oh, I have such heaps to tell you, I don't know where to begin! You know the trouble we had about poor mamma?" Her hazel eyes filled with tears. "We really thought we should lose her; the doctors recommended change of air, so we all migrated southward. She got new health and I gained a French accent, two things not to be despised. I learnt how to swear at the servants in the most perfect French possible, to lose my pocket-money at the roulette tables with the sang-froid of an old roué, to fear my dearest friends to pieces behind their backs, to love everything that was wicked, to hate everything that was good; when fortunately mamma had a quarrel with the swell doctor, so she carried me back to England with my character still pinned to my back, or else if I had stopped there another week I am sure I should have lost it!"

"That quarrel was a merciful providence."

"Indeed, you would say so, if you only knew."

As the steamer slowly made its way down the beautiful Tagus, with the setting sun glorifying into flaming hues the many glistening roofs of terraced houses stretching along its banks, these two were as utterly impassive with regard to the scenery around them as the Tower of Belem frowning down on the waves from its post of observation on the heights.

To the lonely man it was an exquisite pleasure to be claimed as the personal property of a pretty girl, and he was enjoying it to the utmost when they were interrupted by a summons to dinner.

CHAPTER II.

"NOT KNOWING THE COST."

THEY were looking at the moonbeams together later on in the evening, the girl's chatter had subsided into that pleasant kind of desultory talk in which we indulge after long acquaintance. To Frank Dacre it seemed already as if he had known this bewildering and most bewitching "cousin" all his life, and yet there was every now and then a constraint in his manner which Madge resented. Looking up into his face, she said slowly,—

"Yes, you are changed, Fred."

"Of course I am changed. I told you I was not the same—"

"Nonsense, I don't mean that."

"What then? Tell me the difference, that I may copy Fred better."

"No; it must have come to you, I suppose, from living away from us all so long," and she sighed.

"Tell me—what is it?"

"You are so cold to what you used to be," she said, softly, with averted head.

"So cold!" There was a catch in his breath which sounded like a gasp. "It is only because I daren't."

The small dark head turned round, the moonlight fell full on the smiling lips and the soft eyes raised shyly to his. Was ever man so tempted before? Not to yield would surely be to make himself out such an insensible brute as the world never knew. He hesitated, and then, yielding to an irresistible temptation, touched her cheek gently with his lips, whilst every pulse in his body throbbed with quicker life, and his heart beat like fifty.

Was it pleasure or shame that flushed his face as he raised his head? He felt ready to sink into the ground as he realised the base advantage he had taken of her mistake;

and yet, at the same time, such is the inconsistency of human nature, and such the folly of his hidden passion, that he would have given years of his life to have had the same temptation and to have sinned again.

From that moment the die was cast. He could not look into her face and tell her that he had claimed a cousin's privilege when he was in reality as great a stranger to her as the world held. No. When the short week was over which would bring them both to England, only to part them for ever, he would go away from her with a simple good-bye; and after a few days he would write to her, and say that the temptation to take her at her word had been too strong for him, that his real name was Francis Dacre, and that, whilst he prayed for her forgiveness, he could scarcely regret his fault, the memory of which would brighten the future of his most lonely life.

Yes, as the days passed by, he resolved, that come what would, he would be true to himself, when the white cliffs of England were close at hand; and each day made it more bitterly hard for the duty to be done which he had so recklessly left undone.

Miss Vivian had no idea of what was passing in her companion's mind, as a few days later she joyously pointed to the Needles, looming indistinctly through the slight haze which hung over the Isle of Wight.

"Before many hours we shall be home." He did not answer. "I shudder at the remembrance of Golden Fort. We went to an artillery picnic there, when I was staying with some friends at Lymington, and when we got down to Yarmouth the steamer had gone, and we were left lamenting. A rash little gunner came to our rescue and offered his boat, which we were mad enough to accept, and five of us women, a tall curate and a fat squire, were crammed into a thing no bigger than a walnut-shell, with a large sail which nobody could manage, and which threatened to capsize us every moment. I have never suffered such agonies in my life, before or since. I made up my mind that I was going to die, and I thought of how I had gambled at Nice, and I was just puckering up my face to cry, when lo! and behold we stuck in the mud, and became most unromantically safe in a moment. It was a sudden descent from the tragic to the ridiculous, but nobody seemed a bit thankful for it, except myself. The curate in the laziest manner offered to carry us in turn to *terra firma*; but we were saved from the degradation of accepting his most unwilling help."

"I wish I had been there."

"So do I; only you would have been sure to drop me in the mud. Fortunately for us, Mr. Morton had been taking a cruise in his steam-launch, and like a charitable creature, he came to tow us off. So like the people in the Bible we all got safe to land. Isn't Yarmouth a dear old place, so quiet and dull?"

"Do you like dull places? I shouldn't have thought it."

"No, I don't, nor dull people either. Does it strike you that you are not very lively to-day?"

"Does it not strike you that when you have been very happy for four or five days it is a bore to find yourself at the end of them?" he demanded in return.

"Not when you may look forward to weeks and weeks just as happy as those days have been."

"Ah! when you may," with a sigh.

"But, Fred, your home is the jolliest house in England, and close to ours, so we shall see you constantly."

"Close to yours? Then you are quite right, it must be the jolliest house in England."

"Of course it is; you used to swear that you wouldn't exchange Dynevor House for Windsor Castle."

"One thing, I never had the chance. Who is coming to meet you?"

"Papa. I never came home from anywhere without finding him on the platform or quay. I should think it wasn't England at all if I didn't see his dear old face to greet me. You

needn't sigh in that dreary manner, for if there is nobody to meet you, you will come with us. We are all one family down in that corner of Surrey."

His face was very white as he turned away without an answer. It was his intention to see Miss Vivian safe on shore, and then slip away and leave no sign. There was to be nothing to warn her—no good-bye, not even a shake of the hand. Only a word to the maid, in order that she might tell her mistress not to trouble herself to wait for him, and then he would go back to his old self. The loneliness of the future appalled him. After the pleasant comradeship with his fictitious cousin, it seemed more hard to bear than ever. He had been weak—terribly weak—and he had to pay for it now; whatever the price, he thought it was worth it.

"What a goose you were to try and humbug me," said Madge with a smile, as leaning on his arm she waited for her turn to land. "One look at your luggage, with its Capt. F. D., 100th K. D. Gs., would have betrayed you in a moment."

"It would do as well for Francis Dacre. Remember, I told you," he said, hoarsely.

"Oh! there's papa. Come." And heeding nothing at the sight of her father's face, she dragged him helter-skelter through the crowd. In another moment she was in Sir Jasper's arms, and her cousin was completely forgotten.

Now was the time to slip away. He turned, but before he could carry out his intention his hand was grasped by a good-looking middle-aged man, whose face beamed with welcome. "Fred, my boy. Glad to see you. 'Pon my honour you're brown as a berry. Here's the old lady; give her a kiss, and never mind the people."

Before he could stop her a lady with a careworn gentle face embraced him tenderly on both cheeks, murmuring in broken accents, "God bless you, my boy, God bless you."

And after that a pair of arms was thrown round his neck, and Alice Dynevor, equally forgetful of the crowd, gave him the sisterly hug which Fred had prophesied.

"It is all a mistake," he stammered, as soon as he had regained his breath. "I am Francis—"

"Don't listen to him," cried Madge. "He is such a humbug. He tried to make me believe it wasn't he, but I was too sharp for him. You haven't shaken hands with papa."

Her father extended his hand, and gave Frank's a hearty shake.

"He might swear it till he was black in the face, but even then his face would betray him," said the Squire. "Give your arm to your mother. We sleep at the Dolphin to-night, and go back to the old place to-morrow. Come along, Alice."

Mr. Dynevor walked on in front with his daughter. Frank followed with Mrs. Dynevor, and Madge brought up the rear with her father.

Frank's brain was in a whirl. He seemed to be hemmed in on every side. If he attempted to tell the truth, his statements were received with a fond and incredulous smile. Why in the name of all that was most incomprehensible had Nature given him a Dynevor face; had fate thrown him into the heart of the Dynevor family, if he had no more connection with them than the porter who was ready to carry his trunks? He drummed on the window-pane of a sitting-room at the Dolphin in utter perplexity, whilst Madge was talking in a low voice to Sir Jasper at the other end of the room. He had just come to the decision that all must be ended before they started for Dynevor the next morning, when Alice came up to his side, and climbing up on a stool—for she was little, and he was big—put one arm round his neck and leant her soft cheek against his: "My darling, we have been so dull without you."

His heart thrilled. All affection was so ineffably sweet to the lonely man. How could he find the heart to rebuff her—a modest, gentle girl; she would almost die with shame at the

idea of offering her caresses to a stranger. It was a pretty face which nestled so confidently on his shoulder, with blue eyes almost as large and bright as his own, and sunny curls, and a soft fair skin such as his might have been as a boy, untanned by an Indian sun. As he stood there, apparently listening with a smile to all her little confidences, whilst his eyes were fixed on the shipping in the port, a plan came into his head which for its audacity was rarely equalled. He could not give up all these good things which were so spontaneously offered without much pain to two at least of those around him. He could not turn his back on the home which was ready to welcome him and go into dull lodgings all by himself, with no one to bid him "Good-morning" or "Good-night" in all the length and breadth of London. His heart was yearning for affection in any shape. Here it was to be found in abundance; freely, lavishly given, enough to fill to the brim the emptiest of lives. The love of father, mother, and sister was all ready for him; and something sweeter still, he fancied, shone out of Madge's eyes. His resolution was taken. It was one month against the whole remainder of his existence; and with the true spirit of a gambler he risked all on the happiness or twenty-eight days. With full purpose and intent, surrendering the uncertain promise of all the after years.

"Eat and drink, to-morrow we die," was his creed. He would rather dine decently and daintily one day, and die the next, than drag out a miserable existence on scanty crusts for half a year. And if he preferred one month of brilliant sunshine to forty or fifty years of cloudy weather, where was the moralist who could convince him that he was in error? If Fred would only consent to take his place without a word, when the time was up, no harm would be done to anyone except himself. The secret would never be known, and as to the cost, he would pay it to the uttermost farthing. Who can count the cost of our doings but God, who sees the end and the beginning at the same time? To us poor mortals it seems so small and insignificant compared with the importance of our object, until the end comes; and then the heart fails, the resolution falters, and that which we have purchased seems nothing, and the price of that purchase will leave us bankrupt for ever.

There was no cloud on the face which turned to Alice with a sunny smile, as, after a moment of more than justifiable hesitation, he put his arm round her small waist and drew her gently to him.

"Don't make me too welcome, or I shall never be able to go back again."

"Don't go back then; nobody wants you to."

"Perhaps; no one will want me to stay."

"The idea! when every one is, as Madge would say, so ridiculously fond of you. I am sure you would never have recognised mamma if you had seen her three weeks after you left. Her eyes were so swollen, and her sweet old nose persistently red."

"Fred, when is your birthday?" said Mr. Dynevor, who came up to tell them that dinner was ready. "Your mother and I had a discussion about it."

"To-day," he answered, promptly, and then grew crimson with the remembrance that the date would, in all probability, not tally with that of Fred Dynevor's.

"Ah! so your mother said, and I was a fool to doubt her word, for she must be the best authority on that subject. Come along, my boy, this salt air has given me an appetite that will astonish you." So saying he linked his arm within Frank's, and led the way into the next room.

CHAPTER III.

"SHOULD AULD ACQUAINTANCE BE FORGOT?"

RELIGION had never had much to do with Frank Dacre's calculations when he was about to take the more important steps in his career. It had never, in fact, entered as a motive power into his life. The natural sweetness of

his disposition had preserved him from the usual embittering effects of neglect; but religion had no hand in softening his malleable heart. "Nurse" had taught him to say his prayers; but her own conscience had been so uneasy when she looked upon the boy's innocent face, that she involuntarily led him to fear the Divine wrath rather than to trust in His love. She told him that if he told a lie God would most likely strike him dead, like that wicked Ananias and Sapphira; and that if he tore his best knickerbockers by climbing up the apple-tree on Sunday, the gates of Heaven would certainly be shut against him, and he would have a corner reserved for him in such a very hot place that he would not want so much as a shirt to his back. The boy, impervious to fear, would shrug his small shoulders and do the very thing that was to incur the dread punishment. Persistent immunity led him to disbelief in these awful threats; and as, he would argue with himself, he had climbed the apple-tree a dozen times with disastrous consequences to his clothing, and never been sent to any other place than his cool white bed, why should anything happen to him on the thirteenth, fourteenth, or fifteenth climb? But if Nurse laid her brown cheek against his, and prayed him to be a good little boy for the sake of the poor lone woman that loved him, then he yielded in an instant; the rosiest apple that ever was seen could never tempt him a foot from the ground.

Anyone who took the trouble to lead him by his affections could do what he liked with him. Unfortunately for him, the only woman he was brought into contact with in later years viewed him as a constant reproach. She had it in her to love him with all the warmth of her passionate heart; but the act that she had sinned against him and his from the first year of his life caused her to close her heart against him as with an iron door. Buffeted about the world, with no higher guide than the expediency of the moment, or the kindness of his own sore heart, it was no wonder that he got into one scrape as soon as he had scrambled out of another; that he kept straight at all was a marvel, and only attributable to that providence which watches over boys as well as sparrows. Fred Dynevor, with his earnest faith in a life beyond the grave, saved him from the hollow abyss of free-thought; but his creed had little shape in it, and barely availed to keep him safe within the fold of the church. One rooted idea in his mind was, that it was perfectly allowable for a man to commit small sins to which he was specially tempted, if he were willing to undergo some suffering as an after penance. He had no doubt that God would accept this voluntary suffering as an expiatory offering. It would have been a dangerous creed for a man with criminal tendencies. Fortunately such was not the case with Francis Dacre; but it led him to oppose a weaker front to wards temptation than he otherwise would. This must be the explanation of conduct which may seem improbable in a man who was not lost to all sense of right and honour.

He thought he was only sinning against himself, and if he chose to risk the dreary weird of the Aftermath, who need lift a finger against him? He would dree that weird alone.

"Wait a moment, Fred, I must just go and speak one word to old Margery." And Madge, on the way home from church, popped her prayer-book into his hand, preparatory to tripping across the churchyard after a picturesque-looking old woman, in a large straw bonnet and neat cotton gown.

"Margery?"

"There; don't you see her? Come along; she will expect you to shake hands with her. Old women always have a special craze for wicked young men."

But instead of following Madge across the close-cut grass he looked after her with a puzzled expression on his face. All old women have a certain likeness to each other—given an

equal amount of toothlessness and general infirmity about the back. But it struck him that this one reminded him most forcibly of his old nurse. Could it be the same; and if so, would she recognize him? Anyhow, it was better not to risk the chance, so he hurried after Mrs. Dynevor and Alice, and caught them up as they emerged into the road. But Miss Vivian was not a young lady to be easily balked; in another minute she ran after them, and told them that Mrs. Margery was waiting at the gate to speak to "Master Fred."

"Won't it do another day?"

"I'm ashamed of you, sir; go at once, or else all the old women in the parish will vote you a hard-hearted, bloated aristocrat!"

With a mock look of resignation he went off, and shaking hands heartily with Mrs. Margery, whom he recognised at once, hoped she was quite well.

She peered into his face with a hungry stare.

"Bless your bonnie face! It does me good to look at you, Master Fred. It reminds me of one I have not seen for years."

"And how is your rheumatism?"

This seemed a safe shot. All old women suffer from it, and Dynevor would have been sure to ask after it.

"Bad; that's the worst of it." And she shook her large bonnet with some sadness. "You see I came here to make a home for my nephews, feeling lonesome like without a bit of chick or child to look after; but it don't suit me to like the other place, though I was born and bred in these parts."

"Indeed, that's a great pity!" he said, absently, as he looked down with much tenderness on the withered face which had always had a smile for Francis when others frowned. "But what are your nephews doing? Are they able to help you at all?"

"Bless you, I don't want their help. I came to help them," she replied, with the pride of independence. "Before I came, they worked for the milkman; one was two year in the ground."

"Poor fellow, what did he die of?"

"No, no; he's alive, and as big as yourself, Master Fred; but he had been two year in the ground, and the other two year in the cowshed."

"What a comfortable position!" with fine sarcasm.

"Yes, there are worse, and there may be better, but it isn't for them to grumble. But I must not be keeping of you, Master Fred, for I see the ladies are waiting for you. Them foreign pairs they do change you above a bit! If Miss Madge hadn't said it was you, I should as lief have taken you for some one else. Eh, but what's that?" With her bright terrier-like eyes she had fastened on a small scar, scarcely visible to a casual observer, on his wrist. "A sore place, may be?"

"No, nothing of the kind," he said, hastily, with the resentment of the healthy for anything of the nature of a sore. "I cut myself there, when a boy, falling over—" He stopped abruptly.

"Nothing like a china dish-cover, I suppose?" she suggested, with her eyes fixed on his face.

"It was years ago; you can't expect me to recollect how it happened. Good-bye!" And before she could say another word he was gone.

"Strange," she muttered, shading the light from her eyes, as he looked after his tall straight figure, making its way over the graves to the gate where the others were waiting for him. "I could take my 'davy that it was the one, whilst all the others seem so cocksure that it's the other. But how could he come here? It must be my poor old brain getting fuddled. And yet I could have kissed him, I could; and my heart real jumped at the sound of his voice!"

"Madge, come for a row in the boat?" said Frank, soon after luncheon, as he lay full length on his back, at Mrs. Dynevor's feet, smoking a mild cigarette, to which she did not

object. Probably she would have allowed him to smoke the biggest cheroot that was ever invented if she had thought it was a case of no tobacco, no Fred; but Frank was the last man in the world to drive a woman to such extremity.

"If I were a sinner like you I should say 'Yes,' but being a saint like myself, I say 'No,' and go to church!"

"Again! you've done it once."

"Let me see, it is nearly three, and you have fed twice to-day; don't you want to feed again?"

"Certainly, every true Englishman longs for his dinner; but what has that got to do with your going to church?"

"I see what Madge means," and Mrs. Dynevor stooped and laid her hand caressingly on Frank's sunny curls. "Is not spiritual food more important than any other; so why should she content herself with taking it once instead of twice?"

"Why, indeed, if there is no chance of spiritual indigestion. I don't mean any irreverence," and he caught hold of her thin hand and kissed it; "only, you see, it would bore me so dreadfully; and if a good thing bores you, it seems to me to turn the good into evil. Where is Alice?"

"Reading to her father, as she always does on Sunday afternoons, before going to church."

"For the purpose of sending him into a nice sleep, in order to keep him out of mischief whilst the rest of his family are off the premises," put in Madge, with a sudden descent from her exalted position of gravity. "My father expects you and Uncle Fred to walk over to our place and fetch him here to dinner, according to the invariable practice of the inhabitants of this house, except when we have friends at home."

"And then do we walk back with you in the evening?"

"That depends upon the weather and a lot of other things. The carriage generally takes us home."

"But not to-night; the moon will be splendid."

"I have a great mind to say I will drive, as you won't come to church," she said, laughingly, as she rose from her chair.

"You wouldn't like me to be a hypocrite?" he rejoined, looking up at her pretty face with admiring eyes. And then a sudden consciousness of his false position came across him, and he got up hastily to hide the crimson blush which dyed his cheeks.

CHAPTER IV.

A STRUGGLE FOR LIFE.

It was half-past four, Frank was idly pulling about the lake admiring the beauties of Dynevor, whilst he waited for the Squire to call him for a walk. It certainly was a place which deserved more than a hurried glance of admiration, and Fred might well have boasted that he would not have exchanged it for any other in England. The house contained two hundred rooms, without counting those over the stables, which were so large that they looked like a little village tucked into the background. Every part of the house that was visible, most of it being covered with a wealth of creepers, sparkled in the sunshine, for it was composed of that grey stone which has in some lights the glistening effect of granite. The front was turretted, with broad windows divided into pointed panes, the lower ones opening on to a terrace, which was succeeded by another, and yet another, till the ground sloped down to the lake. Every kind of shrub and flower found its place in the garden, and every terrace was fringed with an infinite variety of greenery. An avenue of proud beeches led up to the house, whilst feathery larches and weeping willows gathered round the water. As to the kitchen-gardens and hot-houses, wonders in floriculture were told of their produce.

Frank looked at it all with wistful eyes. He

watched the deer browsing amidst the ferns in the far stretching glades of the enormous park; he looked up at the mass of building with the kindly look of home written on all its simple grandeur, and he felt that he would have given all that he possessed only to have belonged to it. He did not covet either lands or rents, but to be a Dynevor of Dynevor seemed to be as good a fate as man could have.

Thinking this as he rested on his oars, he saw the man who called him "son" standing amongst a tuft of bracken at the head of the lake. There was a contrivance there, a sort of trap for catching eels, which had long been disused, and the Squire was engaged in removing the grating when Frank turned round. Not knowing of the eel-trap, Frank wondered what he was after; and he wondered still more when the old gentleman disappeared altogether. With a few hurried pulls, he was close to the spot in a minute; jumping out of the boat, he sprang up the small hill, without the slightest idea of what had happened; but when his eye fell on the open hole, his face turned pale, for he knew that Mr. Dynevor must have fallen in. Bending down, he could see a form all doubled up in a crouching attitude at the bottom of the well. The perspiration stood out on his forehead, for he thought that he was dead. There was not a moment to be lost, for the body was lying face downwards, in about a foot and a half of water, quite enough for suffocation under the circumstances.

"Father!" the word seemed to come quite naturally in his terror. "Father, are you hurt?"

There was a slight movement—then a groan. Frank looked around in despair, at his wife's end to know what to do. His eye fell on a rusty chain, which had some connection with the works. He caught hold of it eagerly, fastened it securely to the stump of a tree; and then, taking off his coat, let himself down very cautiously, for there was little room to place his feet, except on the Squire's body. Then he gently raised the face, down which the blood was trickling from a blow on the temple; undid the collar and scarf, and supporting the heavy head on his shoulder, waited impatiently for some sign of recurring consciousness. It was utterly impossible to move a man of Mr. Dynevor's size unless he were able to a certain extent to assist himself, and Frank was just pondering which would be the wisest thing to do, to wait for an indefinite time till his powers returned with the recovery of his senses, or to leave him there and seek for assistance at the gamekeeper's lodge. He was loathe to choose the latter alternative, because it would be such a deplorable position for Mr. Dynevor to find himself in if he revived during his absence. He would not know that Frank was doing his best to help him; he would imagine himself undiscovered, and be tormented with fears lest he should remain in that miserable plight for hours. But the question was to be decided in a peremptory manner, which put an end to all hesitation at once; for a fact pressed itself on Frank's notice which made it perfectly evident that their situation, unpleasant as it was now, would be simply untenable in a few hours' time. The water, which had been only a foot and a-half deep when Mr. Dynevor fell in, was gradually creeping up the slimy walls; inch by inch it rose, slowly but surely. There was nothing to stop it, nothing to hinder it; like an enemy which knew its powers, it could afford to be deliberate, because it knew itself to be irresistible. Captain Dacre's face grew pale with horror. He knew that at any moment he could save himself, so that it was no fear of personal risk which shook his nerves, but how could he leave the kindly old man to his fate and face Alice, Mrs. Dynevor, and Madge, with the news that father, husband and uncle lay drowned like a rat in a hole? Impossible! Some effort must be made, and that instantly. The Squire opened his eyes and looked wonderingly with a dazed expression into Frank's troubled face.

"Eh! what is it, my boy?"

Frank briefly exclaimed,—

"If you can help yourself a little, I think I can manage to get you out."

"Help myself I will, if my life depends on it; but my leg pains me a bit." He could scarcely suppress a groan as he tried to stand up, and stumbled against Frank. He turned so white that the latter was mortally afraid that he was going to faint; but the Squire was too game for that. He laid hold of the chain and tried to steady himself. "I think I could do it if it weren't so beastly suffocating down here."

"Do the best you can, and I will help you. No time is to be lost."

"Ay, ay, my boy. God have mercy on us!"

With great difficulty he raised himself about a foot, then stopped, breathing heavily. The veins on his forehead seemed ready to burst, the sweat in large drops rolled down his cheeks. It seemed utterly impossible for him to make another effort. The water was rising steadily, it was up to Frank's waist now, soon it would reach his shoulder. And after that, if the Squire were still unable to move the end would soon come. If he had only waited till the last day of the month it would not have been so hard to die; but now, at this juncture, it was maddening. To give up all for which he had risked his self-respect, and the whole happiness of after years—now when he had it in his grasp, was preposterous. His face was set and hard. He had said that afternoon that it bored him dreadfully to say his prayers more than once in a day. After that could he dare to ask help from God because he was in physical extremity? His heart swelled with many conflicting emotions. The small patch of sky just visible above the mouth of the well seemed to bring Heaven more near to him than the whole expanse of the firmament sufficed to bring it, when death was a ghost, not thought of, because never seen. And then sweetly, like a message from Heaven itself, came the sound of church-bells on the soft summer air, telling of a joy, and a peace and a hope beyond the small confines of this earthly life. He thought of Madge kneeling at her devotions, with a prayer for him, perchance, upon her sweet lips, and though Heaven seemed strangely near, earth had lost none of its sweetness. He could not die without one more touch of her soft white hand.

"Fred, you had better go first," said the Squire, faintly.

"Not if I know it. Hold fast, sir, life is worth a struggle. There, put your foot in that hole, and I'll give you a hoist. Steady. Now once more. Now again. Now leave all to me. You are near the top. There's a little cleft which will give you a purchase. Now with all your might—again. The water is rising fast."

"Save yourself, Fred."

"Not I. Good God, you won't give way!" he exclaimed, in dismay, as Mr. Dynevor's grasp relaxed.

"No, no; I'll do it, my boy. Now then!"

He saw that in another moment it would be too late, for the Squire's strength was failing. He climbed past him to the top—how, he never knew; but in times of danger men have been known to climb like cats—and clutching hold of coat and arm and head, sometimes one, sometimes the other, with one supreme effort of muscle and determination he dragged Mr. Dynevor, by this time almost helpless, over the brim and on to the ground. As the Squire lay panting on the broken ferns, Frank, breathless and exhausted, tumbled down on his knees beside him. He had scorned to ask Heaven to save a life which had never been devoted to its service, but now that it was given to him out of the plenitude of its mercy, the first words that came from the fulness of his heart were—"Thank God!"

The church-bells were ringing still; the well which had been so nearly the grave of both was full to the brim but powerless to harm; the soft summer breeze stirred the surface of the lake, and Mr. Dynevor looked up into Frank's face with moist eyes. "You have

saved my life, Fred, and I shall never forget it!"

CHAPTER IV.

STILL UNDER A MASK.

HAVING summoned some of the gamekeepers to carry the Squire home on a hurdle, Frank hurried to the house to break the news to Mrs. Dynevor. He took the precaution as he went round by the stables to despatch a groom for the doctor, to wash his face and hands at the pump, for fear lest the sight of his manifold scratches might increase her alarm.

Though he made as light of the accident as he could, she was terribly frightened; and the only way to calm her agitation was to suggest that she must go indoors at once and improvise a bed in one of the rooms downstairs for her husband's reception.

When the doctor came he said that the left leg was broken, but as it was a simple fracture he hoped that when it was once set there would be no after consequences, such as lameness or stiffness in the limb. The blow on the temple was of far greater importance, and if the patient were not kept perfectly quiet the after-effects might be most serious.

Frank was clasped over and over again in Mrs. Dynevor's arms, as she blessed him, with tears of gratitude rolling down her pale cheeks, for having saved his father's life. The Squire had told her all about it in short disjointed sentences, and she ran down, as soon as she could be spared, to cry over it on her boy's shoulder. As the story spread through the household, Frank became the hero of the day; Alice hugged him repeatedly, sobbing hysterically over her terror and thankfulness; whilst Madge was the quietest of them all, but he had no cause to be dissatisfied or doubtful as to her feelings on the subject.

A messenger was sent to Vivian Chase, and Sir Jasper came over at once to offer help and sympathy. He was very like his sister, Mrs. Dynevor, but more handsome as a man than she was as a woman, with his aquiline nose, melancholy dark eyes, sallow cheeks, and black imperial. His wife was an invalid, and often away from home at some watering-place, so he depended much for companionship on his only daughter Madge. The tie between them was so close, the love each felt for the other so passionate and engrossing, that a man must have been a paragon indeed who could tempt Miss Vivian to desert her home. Matrimonial chances were thrown away without a thought.

"I don't want to marry," said Madge, "and nobody is so nice as papa."

"Papa" was sitting with Mrs. Dynevor in the Squire's room; Alice was flitting to and fro on useful errands. The house was settling into an ordinary state of decorous quiet suited to a Sunday evening, and the moonlight fell softly on two heads which were rather close together on the upper terrace.

"Did you think you were going to die?" Madge asked in an awe-struck voice.

"I thought of you, Madge, and I knew I couldn't—at least, without a try." And then there was a silence, a sheep-bell tinkled in the fields, a bird fluttered in a rose-bush, and not another sound broke the stillness. "I wondered if you had a thought for me in your prayers. Tell me, could you ever pray for a careless fellow like me?"

"I pray for all I care for," she said rather huskily, as if something had stuck in her throat.

"And you cared enough for me?" No answer; but he drew her gently to him, and their eyes met. Not a word was spoken, but two hearts beat wildly with suppressed and unacknowledged passion.

The part which Captain Dacre had elected to play grew more difficult as the days flew by. People came up and accosted him in the road—people who had known Fred Dynevor ever since he was a small boy in knickerbockers—and it was hard to affect an appearance of old friendship when their names and everything

about them were strange to him. He called Jervis, the head gamekeeper; Gregory; and Gregory, the second keeper, Jervis. He mistook the names of his own dogs, and only by the practice of Machiavellian craft became acquainted with the cognomens of his horses. When he was in London he felt at his ease; but he grudged every moment spent away from the charmed circle at Dynevor. Time went so fast, and exile was near. He went to bed late, keeping Alice up to hours she had never heard strike before, treasuring every proof of her affection as a miser might every coin of his hoard; and he was up early, regretting every moment spent in sleep, as it robbed him of so much of his time of enjoyment. Every one had a good word for him, except himself; but there was no measure to the scorn and loathing he heaped on his own head, when conscience was awake and contrived to speak. But in this there was no repentance. For one of Madge's smiles he would have done it again and again.

He was walking down Pall Mall one afternoon, about three o'clock, when Lady Wolverton passed him in a landau. The carriage stopped, and she beckoned to him. He went with small alacrity, for the sight of her face reminded him of the unpleasantest part of his life.

"So you are in England, and you never dropped me a line?" she said, reproachfully, as she placed her hand in his.

"Had I known that you wished it—"

"You know that I have been interested in you all your life. Who is there, in fact, but myself to care if you live or die?"

"Who indeed?" he said, bitterly.

"But you look well and strong and healthy, as if you hadn't a care in the world." Her tone was peevish, as if she thought it a liberty.

"I don't wear them painted on my face."

"But if they are there, they always show. Look at me."

"You are not looking well." His blue eyes softened into kindness. "Have you been ill?"

"No, but I am never well. I shan't live long to trouble you or anyone else."

"You don't trouble me," he said, elevating his eyebrows. "As far as I know, you have been my persistent benefactress."

"As far as you know," and she sighed.

"Will you come and see me, Frank?"

His face darkened.

"I cannot come to Park Lane—I was kicked out."

"And I can't ask you to 'The Hollies' because Wolverton is there. What are we to do?"

"I am afraid the Fates are against it," he remarked with evident resignation.

"In a fortnight's time I shall be staying with my sister at Blagrove, in Surrey. Will you come to me there?"

"In a fortnight's time"—his face grew ineffably sad—"I may be out of England."

"But if you are not, you will come to me? And remember the promise you made me long ago." He nodded. "I shall claim it soon. Good-bye. Lewis and Allenby's!" (to the footman).

"Poor thing!" ejaculated Frank, as he gazed compassionately at the yellow feather in her bonnet, which was fast disappearing from sight. "I hope her secret will die with her. Nothing will matter to me then." This he said, referring to the end of the month, and not to Lady Wolverton's death.

Finding that his finances were remarkably low he got into a hansom and drove to Messrs. Drummond and Co.'s to ask for his dividends, which were due. Some of them he immediately invested in presents for those at Dynevor. One bracelet was destined for Madge, but it was not to be given till the day when he should look upon her face no more.

On his return home he went straight to the Squire's room, where he found the whole party assembled. He kissed Mrs. Dynevor, patted Alice's soft brown head, and sat down by the

side of the patient's bed. After Mr. Dynevor's health had been inquired into, and the presents given to "mother" and "sister," they naturally asked him as to his doings.

"I went to the club, which was horribly crowded, then to Bond Street to order a new coat, to replace the one I spoilt on Sunday, and then, finding that I had only seven-and-sixpence left in my pocket, drove off to the bank and procured some of the needful."

"Ah, I was wondering how you managed," said the Squire, musingly. "Old Hayton told me you had not drawn a penny of your account, and the Admiral's money was all lodged there for your benefit, according to the express terms of his will. What did you think of Hayton's son? The old man wears well, doesn't he?"

"I didn't see either of them," said Frank, stooping down to pick up an envelope. "Mother dear, isn't there any tea going? The Academy, to which I went afterwards, made me perfectly ravid with thirst."

"Didn't see either of them! Very strange. Both away at the same time! I call that a very slovenly way of doing business. I am afraid I must ask you, Fred, for a cheque to pay the gardeners, as my right arm feels very powerless."

"Certainly; or rather," he added hastily, "I will give it you in notes, as I sprained my thumb so that my signature would scarcely be legible."

"Sprained your thumb! and you never said a word about it. Let me see it." Both mother and sister looked at it in deep concern. It was really swollen, for the convenient sprain was not a fiction.

"It had better be wrapped in a rag soaked in brandy," said Mrs. Dynevor, eyeing it through her double eye-glasses.

"I would rather have a brandy and soda for internal application," said Frank, with a laugh. "If I am to have no tea, I must have something else."

"Come along, Fred, and let us see after it. We had tea two hours ago; but you shall have a cup if you like."

Mrs. Dynevor looked after them as Alice left the room clinging to Frank's arm, and then she laid her small thin hand upon her husband's. "If a special providence had not sent that boy home just a fortnight ago, I should never have known another happy moment."

"I don't know so much about that," rejoined the Squire, with a smile. "A special providence might have kept me on my feet, or sent Jervis to pull me out instead."

How fast the days fly when you wish time to be crippled! Frank watched them greedily, but he could not stop them. The end was close at hand, and he must face it—must go out into the wilderness, and hear the gates of Eden close behind him. Regret was useless. If only Fred would carry out his plan! For old friendship's sake he could bear it—could bear to see the death of his happiness—if only he could save his name from the soil of shame. He would not spoil his present enjoyment by a thought. Care was cast behind him so completely, that those who looked upon his handsome face with its sunny smile never guessed that he had a wish unfulfilled in the world. He was devoted itself to Mr. Dynevor, sitting up with him sometimes for the whole night, when his arm or his leg caused him any uneasiness; reading to him in his soft musical voice for hour after hour; bringing him the first bunch of grapes, or the freshest strawberries, to give him an appetite for breakfast. And this without any effort, for kindness came as naturally to him as sunshine to the sun. To each and all he felt that he owed a debt, and any service that he could render helped to soothe his conscience. To Madge, he felt bound in honour to make no declaration of his love, and yet he showed it in a thousand ways. It might pass, he hoped, for a cousinly flirtation. At least he had no reason to think it had advanced much farther on her side, and if so, she might easily fancy that it was the same with him. How he should ever be

able to control himself when he bade her a good-bye, which must not seem like a good-bye, he did not know. He only hoped that the courage would come with the demand for it.

It was a perfect day, towards the end of June; the trio had been to a picnic in the woods, and were now riding back to Dynevor through the quiet lanes. Madge was to dine with her aunt, and then Frank was to be allowed the privilege of escorting her home. She generally kept one or two dresses at Dynevor, so a change of costume could be easily effected.

"I feel quite hoarse," said Madge. "I don't think I ever laughed so much in my life before. It was so delicious to watch that Miss Montague. She had not the slightest idea you were making fun of her, and I would have given worlds to tell her."

"It was too bad of me, but I really couldn't help it; besides, you put me into such a bad temper by flirting with that wretched little grasshopper Count something or other."

"And why shouldn't I flirt with the grasshopper if I liked?" and she looked at him coquettishly from under the brim of her hat.

"Because cousins are made for flirtation, and when one is close at hand it is a waste of good material to choose someone else," he said, dogmatically.

"Indeed! if cousins are made for nothing better than that, why any one else will do instead," her red lips slightly pouted.

"I don't see that; many people have a worse object for their lives. Flirtation is frivolous, but—"

"And frivolity is my bane," she interrupted, quickly. "I meant to be quite a serious person years ago."

"And what changed you?"

"Going to Nice, I think. Pleasure was so very pleasant that I got into the habit of it, and couldn't get out. I often think I shall be terribly punished for enjoying myself so much."

"Some enjoyment is worth it."

"Isn't it wrong to think so?" and she looked up into his face with serious eyes.

"No, if you are prepared to pay the penalty, you may do as you like. There is only one sin for which there is no forgiveness."

"But, Fred, there is no knowing how wicked we might all be if we thought like you. Surely if we sin with our eyes open it will go very hard with us at the last."

"But before the last comes, we may have done our best to expiate it."

"And supposing the end came too soon?"

"I should have to trust in something beyond myself."

"That we must all do; but, Fred, you frighten me sometimes, you seem so reckless. When I remember what you used to be, the high standard by which you tried all of us, and yourself as well, I am afraid that India has had a bad effect upon you; you have gone down instead of up."

"And so I have," he said, with such bitterness that she was seized with compunction. "And if you knew what I had been through you might give me some credit for not sinking lower than I have. But where is Alice?"

"Here," said her soft voice close behind him. I have been ever so long trying to get this red wild rose out of the hedge, but you two were talking so fast that you never missed me. I wonder what would happen to either of you if you lost your tongue."

"A fit of involuntary silence, of course," he answered, tamely, as if his thoughts had strayed. "We had better push on a little faster, or we shall be late for dinner."

They were late, and had to hurry to their rooms at once, in order not to keep Mrs. Dynevor waiting. When dinner was over the girls went on to the terrace, whilst Frank picked up the *Globe* and walked off to sit with the Squire. He was away longer than usual. Mrs. Dynevor had fallen asleep over her knitting at the drawing-room window. Alice grew tired of walking up and down, and so she per-

sued Madge to take her place at the piano, and play one dreamy piece after another. Still Frank did not come. They were beginning to feel rather cross at his neglect, when Mrs. Dynevor, waking up with a start, told Alice to go and tell her brother that tea was waiting.

Alice went straight to her father's room, to find him fast asleep, with his gold-rimmed spectacles on his nose, the newspaper on the carpet. The lamp had been shaded by a careful hand, and everything that he could possibly need put close within reach, but Frank was not to be seen. She stepped on tiptoe across the room and out of the open window. The stillness was so intense that the sound of her light footsteps on the gravel was disagreeably audible to her ears as she walked slowly along the terrace, afraid of calling out lest she should wake her father. Presently she descried something dark in the corner which did not move when she said, "Fred," although she was quite close enough to be heard. A feeling of awe crept over her. If it was really Fred why did he stand there as motionless as the statue of Venus above his head? Her heart beat fast as, summoning all her courage, she went up to him and laid her hand gently on his arm. His head was bent down on the stonework of a vase of flowers in an attitude of deepest dejection, but he raised it quickly as he felt her touch, and putting his arm round her asked her what she wanted.

"You," she said, half frightened. "Tea is waiting, and Madge and I feel very cross at being deserted."

"Do you? Then I must make my peace as fast as I can."

Though he spoke jestingly, his voice sounded harsh, and all the spring had gone out of his walk. Lumps of lead seemed to be hanging to his feet.

Alice looked up at him as he drew the lace curtains aside for her to step into the drawing-room, and she saw that his face was as white as his own shirt-front.

"What is the matter, Fred?" she whispered.

"Are you ill?"

"Nothing, dear; down in the mouth, that's all. I want you to sing 'For ever and for ever,' Madge," he said, presently, going up to the piano with his teacup in his hand. "I like it awfully."

"Then I don't think you deserve it."

"Don't scold me to-night. Keep it till to-morrow."

"And to-morrow you will say, 'not to-day.'"

"No, I shan't. To-morrow you may scold to your heart's content, for I am going to run away."

"To run away!"

Her eyes opened wide with dismay.

But his own were fixed on the strings of the piano as he leant up against it, so their expression was lost upon him.

"Yes; I am going to Southampton to meet a friend. But please sing, we can talk about that afterwards."

Madge sang in her sweet rich voice, all the pathos of her heart ringing out in the words:—

"Blessing or curse, whichever thou be."

Frank's eyes were fixed upon her lovely face as if he were trying to imprint every line of it on his memory. The last notes were echoed by a deep sigh, as he turned away, without as much as a "Thank you."

"I think you are all so tired that you will be glad to be in bed," said Mrs. Dynevor, folding up her knitting. "Madge, dear, you had better change your mind, and consent to sleep here."

"I must go home, thank you, auntie; but I ought to be starting at once."

She rose from the music-stool as she spoke, but Frank was so urgent in his entreaties for another song that she sat down again.

"You bad boy," said Mrs. Dynevor, with a kindly smile, about an hour later. "I don't think you mean any of us to get to bed at all to-night. I must go and see after your father."

"Not yet, mother. I read him to sleep as sound as a top, and the night is so perfect, it is a sin and a shame to lose it."

"Much you see of it, hanging over the piano," said Alice, with an ill-disguised yawn. "Will you come to Box-hill with us to-morrow?" He shook his head. "Then the next day?"

"I make no rash promises."

"If Madge asks you, will you come?" with a mischievous glance at her cousin.

"I would do all I could to please you both. Come, you can't say I am given to say, 'No.'"

"No, you are the dearest and most obliging of brothers, so there!" and an affectionate kiss was planted on his cheek; "and if you were going to stay here for ever, I don't think we should be sorry."

"Not really?" he looked down fondly into her eyes. "If I were to be smashed up in a railway collision to-morrow, you would give me a tear?"

"One and a half. Don't talk of such things."

"Worse things might happen to a fellow. Good-night, little one. Good-night, mother," and with a smile he turned to Madge, who was waiting for him, with a soft black toque on her head and a lace scarf wound round her graceful throat.

CHAPTER V.

GOOD-BYE.

ALONG with Madge Vivian for the last time, knowing that if his life lasted to threescore years and ten, or if it ended with to-morrow's sun, he still must never look upon her fair face again. Frank had hard work to seem outwardly composed. He felt like some poor lamb marked out for slaughter at the next butcher's shop; whilst his woolly companions might pass on to fresh pastures in sunshine and shade. The heat of the day might be over for him, but it is probable that the lamb would be glad to try its luck on the morrow, and many succeeding morrows as well.

"Blessing or curse, whichever thou be," he repeated, for the words would ring in his head. "I heard one lady, in Bombay, inveighing against that line; she said it carried love beyond the verge of propriety. Do you see any harm in it?" He stood still to wait for an answer, leaning against the stem of a thorn on the verge of the lawn at Vivian Chase. The shadows were very deep under the large cedars on the opposite side, but the moonbeams rested on the white pillars of the verandah and on the dewy grass. A nightingale was singing not far off, and her song was the only sound that broke the stillness.

"I don't know if there is harm in it, 'tis very true," said Madge, softly.

"You think it possible to stick to a friend, even when he sinks?" He bent forward in his earnestness, and fixed his large eyes on her downcast face.

"I think it impossible to do otherwise." Her tone was scarcely above a whisper, but he caught the words, and drew a deep breath as he pushed the hair back from his forehead. The temptation to tell her all had almost mastered him. But no, it would not be fair to submit her to such a test. Even if she did not cast him off, down in her heart of hearts there must be one grain of scorn which would grow like the mustard tree, and cast a shadow over the brightness of two lives. Better to leave her so, with the love that neither spoke, shining out of her glorious eyes, and answered by his own, than to see the lids lowered, if but for one instant, in shame.

"Such friendship is very sure," he said, after a pause. "Madge, will you do me a favour?" And he drew a small case from his pocket as he spoke. "Will you wear that bracelet, night and day, and never take it off?"

"But, Fred—"

"Don't say 'But,' take it, and let me feel that it is always there," and without further remonstrance he clasped it round her wrist. It was a solid gold band, with the words "In memoriam" in small diamonds.

"How lovely! I shall prize it so much, Fred. Is it in remembrance of that awful

day when you saved Uncle Fred's life, and nearly lost your own?"

"You may take it so," with a wan smile. "And now good night, if you won't come in. I can see papa's light in the study."

He took her hand in his, and under his fair moustache his lips trembled. "Good-night, Madge," he said hoarsely, for the words would scarcely come, "and good-bye." He hesitated, trying hard to restrain himself; and then, as if the temptation were too strong for him, he caught her to his breast and kissed her once and again. Then, without another word, he was gone; and she was left alone with her throbbing heart in the still night.

Rapidly he walked home across the fields, and so into the park, startling the deer from their covert amongst the bracken, the birds from their nests in the thickets, conscious of nothing but that he had said good-bye, and the end had come. For a while he stood lost in thought at the head of the lake, whilst his eye wandered rapturously over the beauties of Dynevor, the house which to-morrow would be closed on him for ever. Never had the place looked more lovely than in the calm beauty of that night of June, with the moonbeams playing on the placid waters and the front of the stately house, catching here and there a glimpse of white stone-work on terrace or vase, or a pale sweet rose shining like a star from out her leafy screen, whilst softly lay the shadows under willow and larch, veiling their pleasant shade in deepest mystery.

He looked at it all with loving eyes. To-morrow he must turn his back on its beauty—to-night it was his to enjoy and revel in till the dawn. He could not go to bed, and lose the intervening hours in sleep. He walked slowly from terrace to terrace, looking most fondly at the spot where he used to linger with Madge. Picking a green leaf from a creeper against which her white arms had rested, close beside the Venus, he placed it in his coat, then turned towards the house. Entering by the library window, which had been left open for him, he went softly across the hall to the room which was now devoted to the Squire's use. He opened the door gently, and went with as little noise as possible up to his bedside. Mr. Dynevor was awake and restless, so Frank took up a book, and proposed to read to him. Full as he was of compassion and remorse, he was thankful to do him this slight service; and read on, hoarse, but indefatigable, till the invalid's eyes closed in the much-desired sleep, and the first streaks of day peered through the shutters. To-morrow had come. Was he prepared to meet it?

After a hurried breakfast, for he had put off the inevitable good-byes till the last moment, Captain Daere jumped into the dog-cart which was waiting at the door, and drove rapidly towards Surbiton. The Squire's last words were ringing in his ears as he pulled his hat well down over his eyes,—

"Don't be away longer than you can help; for you have spoilt me so, that I can't do without you." Frank had wrung his hand in silence, knowing that his place would soon be filled by another.

Mrs. Margery Brown was standing amongst the hollyhocks and sunflowers at the gate when the dog-cart passed. She beckoned frantically for it to stop. Frank turned to the groom:

"Have we time to wait?"

"Not if you wish to catch the down train at Surbiton, sir."

"Then call at her house on your way back, and see what she wants."

They drove on in seeming unconcern, and old Margery wrung her withered hands in despair. "There will be murder done ere the day's out, and I not there to prevent it," she muttered, as she went back into her homely kitchen and smoothed out the crumpled sheet of the *Globe* which Miss Alice had wrapped round some things which she had given her that morning. Yes, there was the name! She

couldn't be mistaken in it—Captain Dynevor, K. D. Gs., amongst a list of passengers on board the *Ganges*, which was to arrive at Southampton that very afternoon.

Her heart sank within her as she contemplated the possible consequences of a meeting between those two—the supplanter and the supplanted.

"I knew it was my boy from the first," she moaned. "I knew it was the dish-cover as cut his precious wrist; but oh! to think it should come to such a curious fate as this! I wish we was all dead and buried, I do, and them that come after might put it straight if they could. Lord ha' mercy on a sinful old woman, and get her to Southampton before the mischief's done!"

"Glad to see you, old fellow! but how the deuce did you know that I was coming?" said Fred Dynevor, as he grasped the hand which Frank extended in a manner which showed that his friendship for him was as warm as ever.

"Distinguished parties can't travel incog., you know. How's the leg?"

"Right as a trivet. Here, Simpson, just collar those rugs. I suppose the train is due?"

"Should you mind sleeping here for a night?" and Frank's pale face flushed. "I have taken rooms for us both, as I have a word to say to you."

"Nothing wrong at Dynevor? All right, then, I'm your man. I've done without my family for five years, so a few hours won't make any difference. Simpson, see that my things are carried to the Dolphin; we sleep there to-night. Come along, old boy, I am awfully hungry. We will defer our talk till after dinner."

Arm-in-arm the two friends entered the hotel, the one so full of his own doings that he never noticed the other's pre-occupation. Now that he was so soon to broach his plan Frank began to fear that it might be indignantly rejected, and if so he would be known at Dynevor as an impostor, and there would not be a single corner of the globe dark enough to hide his shame.

No wonder that his food seemed to choke him, and glass after glass of iced claret failed to cool his parched throat. He sat on thorns whilst Dynevor gossiped about the friends he had left behind at Bombay, or those who had been his fellow-passengers on board the *Ganges*. Frank had no interest but for the chosen few at Dynevor, and though he listened, laughed, and tried to chaff, his attention was forced, and his answers mere random shots. At last Fred got up and proposed an adjournment to the window, by which they established themselves in two large armchairs, with cigars in their mouths, and their glasses on a small table between them.

"Out with it, Frank," said Captain Dynevor, cheerfully, as he leant back with one leg crossed over the other; "I suppose you've been popping the question, and want me to be best man?"

But when the story was told—with some hesitation and many interruptions—his cheery expression vanished. Astonishment, dismay, and the deepest concern followed each other in quick succession. And when Frank implored him, for the sake of old friendship, to carry on the deception in his own person, to go to Dynevor and pretend to be the same man as had stayed there for the last four weeks, he shook his head in resolute denial.

He paced up and down the room with long strides, a frown on his sunburnt face, and his hands thrust deep into his pockets.

"Not for any man living could I act a lie. It won't do, Frank. Make a clean breast of it, that is the only way."

Dacre leant up against the window, his gaze fixed intently on the sea; but he saw neither ships nor waves, only a small sweet face, with tears in the wistful eyes. Was it never to be seen again except in dreams?

"I couldn't do it. If I tried, I should make a mucker of it directly. You've got into a hole,

and I will help you out of it, if I can; but not with a lie. I could never look anyone in the face again."

"Say no more," said Frank, sternly. "If I had looked on it in that light, I could never have done it."

"I know it. Anyhow, you must have been stark, staring mad when you began it. 'Where are you off to?' as Dacre crossed the room and opened the door."

"To—to bed. We have been talking for the last four hours, and I feel done."

"Oh, very well. Good-night. Of course you will come to Dynevor with me to-morrow? What time does the train start?"

"Ten-twenty, I fancy. You had better telegraph for them to meet you at Surbiton. Good-night!"

"You are coming with me?" he persisted. "I think India will be the best place for me, after this," said Frank, slowly, and nodding to his friend, he shut the door.

Captain Dynevor, accustomed as he was to any sort of bed, in any sort of climate, was also in the habit of falling asleep as soon as he laid his head upon his pillow; but this night he found it as impossible to keep his eyes closed as any fretful old maid with the toothache. He could not forget the look on his old chum's face as he went out of the room. It might have been that of a convict when the sentence is passed, and he is left alone with his guilty past and hopeless future. The misery of it haunted him, and entirely disturbed his rest. He would have given anything to be able to do as Frank wished; but he was so thoroughly honest and straightforward that it was as impossible for him to deceive another as to deceive himself. And yet he made every possible excuse for the other's weakness. Putting himself in his place, he tried to realise the full force of the temptation, and imagine that he might have done the same. But after all, he only arrived at the conclusion that it must have been a case of temporary insanity. Perhaps Frank had a sunstroke on the voyage home, and the effects of it clung to him still. With this consoling thought, Captain Dynevor turned over for the twentieth time, and at last managed to get to sleep.

He woke with a start, to find Frank standing by his bedside—dressed, and apparently in his right mind.

"Hullo! Anything the matter?"

"No. Good-bye, old fellow. I only wanted to say be kind to Madge." There was an odd tremor in his voice, and his face was deathly white.

Before Fred could answer, he was at the door, but he roused himself sufficiently to shout after him—"Where the deuce are you off to now?"

"To have a bathe." Then the door shut, and Frank was gone.

(To be concluded in our next.)

At a dinner party in London there were two sisters present, one a widow who had just emerged from her weeds, the other not long married, whose husband had lately gone out to India for a short term. A young barrister present was deputed to take the young widow into dinner. Unfortunately he was under the impression that his partner was the married lady whose husband had just arrived in India. The conversation between them commenced by the lady remarking how extremely hot it was. "Yes, it is very hot!" replied the barrister. Then a happy thought suggested itself to him, and he added with a cheerful smile: "But not so hot as the place to which your husband has gone." Words are powerless to convey any idea of the sequel, but the look with which the lady answered this lively sally will haunt that unhappy youth till his death.

We never know the true value of friends. While they live we are too sensitive to their faults; when we have lost them we only see their virtues.

SWEET INISFAIL.

A ROMANCE.

By the Author of "The Mystery of Killard, &c."

CHAPTER IV.

THE END OF THE STORM.

It was close to midnight when the storm was over. The South Tipperary Hotel closed its doors at eleven o'clock.

At half-past eleven there was a knock at the door.

"Is Mr. Isaacs in, James?" asked the man who had knocked.

"Yes, Mr. Pryce. He's expecting you. Will you go up to him, sir? Awful night, sir. Will you take off your legging and leave them here with your mackintosh? I'll get the boots to wash the mud off, while you're above with Mr. Isaacs. Am I to sit up, sir, for you, Mr. Isaacs told me to ask you if you'd like some supper?"

"I don't want any regular supper, James. I want you to do exactly what I tell you. I want you to bring up, after me, a plate of sandwiches. I don't want any cloth to be laid. I just want to be able to eat the sandwiches as I talk to Mr. Isaacs. I would feel obliged if you would wait up for me. Fill this flask with half and half, water and whisky, and bring it up to me when you bring the sandwiches. Here's a crown for yourself."

"Thank you, sir. I'm sure I'm very much obliged. If you like, sir, to take off your boots I'd have them nicely dried and polished by the time you're coming down. That is, sir, if you think you'll be anything like an hour."

Manton sat down somewhat wearily on a chair in the hall. James helped him off with his boots and supplied him with a pair of slippers. "I shall be no longer than an hour," said he. "Have you many people in the house?"

"No, sir, not a soul but the gentleman in the drawing-room. The two commercials that were in seven and eleven last night went away this evening. I'll be sure to have your mackintosh and legging and boots all nice and ready for you when you come down."

Manton now ascended the staircase. When he reached the landing, he paused under a gas bracket, glanced cautiously round him, and then pulled a thick pocket-book out of his breast pocket. This he opened, and from it took out a bundle of notes. He turned back the first of these. It was one for a hundred pounds. He nodded his head as though something of which he was uncertain had been confirmed. Then rolling the bundle up once more he walked upstairs and knocked at the drawing-room door.

"Come in, Pryce," said the dwarf in his cheerful and blandest voice.

The other turned the handle and entered.

"It is so good of you to come," said the dwarf. "It is so kind of you to think of bearing me company another night. Come over and sit down. You look tired. Have you had supper?"

"James is bringing me up something," said Manton, as he sank heavily on a chair.

"And so," said the dwarf, with vivacity, "you have come back to-night to try your luck again. What a courageous fellow you are, Manton. By-the-way, you have taken off your boots. Do you intend sleeping here to-night? Yes, do sleep here to-night. Let us make a night of it; I'm tired of business and humdrum life; I want some excitement, some relaxation."

"I took off my boots," said Manton, "because I had to walk a long way to borrow the money with which I want to play you to-night. And James has promised to dry my boots while I am here."

At that moment the waiter entered, bearing on a silver plate of sandwiches and a flask. On the table at which they both sat were a decanter of whisky, a box of cigars a tray with glasses, tumblers, sugar, lemons and hot water.

When the waiter had retired, Manton began eating the sandwiches.

"Won't you drink something with them?" asked the dwarf.

"I'll eat first and drink afterwards, but I can eat and play at the one time. Where are the cards? It is getting late, and I have at the outside but an hour."

"As soon as you like," said the dwarf, producing the cards from the old tea-caddy. What shall we play for? A sovereign?"

Manton put his hand into his breast-pocket, took out the pocket-book, unstrapped it, and produced the bundle of notes. Winding the first of these carelessly away from the others, he put it face downward on the table. "Let us play for that, whatever it is," he said, languidly.

"Is it a two or a three or a five?" asked the dwarf.

"I don't know," said Manton, pausing for a moment in his eating. "But whatever it is I have lots more. Turn it up."

"Why it's a hundred!" screamed the dwarf. "A cool hundred, Manton. Have you got a gold mine?"

"No," said Manton, "but a banknote plantation, where all the leaves of the trees are notes of various values. Do you see?"

"Ay, ay," said the dwarf, with delight. "You are a wonderful man. The most wonderful man I ever met."

"All right," said Manton, who had by this time finished the sandwiches. "Put another hundred down and let us go on."

"With all my heart," said the hunchback, eagerly. He counted out ten tens and placed them on the single note.

They played. Manton won.

"Double or quits. Same as last night?" said Manton.

"Ay, ay," said the dwarf, with enthusiasm. He drained his glass.

"While you're counting out I'll mix myself some punch. Shall I make some for you? The friend who lent me this money to-night showed me a new way of brewing punch. I think it admirable."

"Ninety-five and ten are a hundred and five—yes, go on, make me the punch, Manton, like a good fellow, and I'll drink to your success."

"To make punch wholesome," said Manton, "you can't have too much lemon."

"A hundred and forty-seven and five are a hundred and fifty-two—well, then, let us have too much lemon."

"I was explaining to you," said Manton, "that you can't have too much."

"A hundred and seventy-eight and three are a hundred and eighty-one—ay, ay, ay. Whatever you like, so that the punch is good and we amuse ourselves with those delightful cards."

Manton had the two tumblers before him. He put a great deal of lemon peel into each, then squeezed half a lemon into each, then added a large quantity of sugar to each, half filled each with hot water, and then floated the whisky in by pouring it softly on a spoon, so that the whisky and water did not mix, the former floating upon the latter. "You must leave it that way a minute or two to cool," said Manton.

"Two hundred," cried the dwarf, "there you are. Now deal the cards."

Manton pushed Isaacs tumbler across the table to him and took up the cards. When they had been cut he dealt two in the direction of the dwarf, but the force with which he threw them was too great, and they slid from the table to the floor.

"I beg your pardon," said Manton, as the dwarf stooped to pick them up. While the latter was stooping, Manton pulled a small bottle out of his pocket and emptied its contents into the dwarf's tumbler. "Stir up your punch now, and see how you like it," said he.

The dwarf did as he was told. Filled a wineglass with the punch, and tossed off the contents of the glass at one gulp.

"Ah!" he said, "there's no mistake about the lemon. Spades, did you say?"

The play went on. Again Manton won.

The dwarf was in the highest state of enthusiasm. "I'll drink to your good fortune," he said, rising. "You are a worthy fellow, and deserve success."

"If you mean what you say," said Manton, "make a bumper of it. Drink to my success, and show me you like my tipple by draining your tumbler."

Manton stood up, chinked glasses with Isaacs, and cried "Hooray."

Both men raised their glasses to their lips and did not put them down until they were empty.

"Double or quits again?" said Manton.

"Certainly," said the dwarf. "There was a cursed lot of lemon in that punch. I'll brew for myself next time. It takes too long to count the money."

"Put your pocket-book on the table, and we'll remember how we stand," said Manton.

"Capital," said Isaacs. "I never felt so happy in my life. I never felt half so happy in my life. There's the pocket-book. I think of nothing but pleasure now. It would be a horrible nuisance to have to count the money. Diamonds, did you say? What puts the rims on the cards? I always knew you were a good fellow, Manton, but I never thought you were a saint until now. There's glory all round your head. There's a glory all round the gas. There's a glory all round everything. But what's the matter with me, Manton? I'm dying with the sleep. . . . Tim, you young scoundrel, if any one calls say I'm gone out for half-an-hour. I must have forty winks in the back office."

He stretched his arms across the table, and his head dropped forward upon them.

Manton waited a few minutes, then thrust all the money that was on the table, his own and the dwarf's pocket-book into his pocket. He took up the insensible money-lender, drew him over to a couch and softly and silently pushed him under it, so that a person looking casually into the room could not see any trace of the hunchback. Then he turned out the gas and left the room.

The bedroom which the dwarf had occupied was on the left. He locked this on the outside, put the key in his pocket and walked downstairs.

"James," said he to the waiter, "you may go to bed now, Mr. Isaacs is gone to his bedroom. I turned out the gas in the drawing-room."

He put on his boots, leggings, and mackintosh, and left the hotel.

Agnes waited until daylight, but her lover never came.

Next morning Edward Pryce, the telegraph clerk at Clonmore, was missing, and that evening George Manton was arrested in Dublin, on suspicion of being concerned in the murder and robbery of Michael Fitzgerald, who's hat had been found floating in the slate quarries.

When George Manton was arrested the sum of twelve thousand five hundred pounds, in one hundred pound banknotes, was found upon him.

CHAPTER V.

THE NEWS ARRIVES AT CLONMORE.

It was noon of the day George Manton left Clonmore before the news of his disappearance spread through the town, and it was well into the afternoon before it became generally known that Michael Fitzgerald, who had intended to come back from Glenary House the previous evening, was missing. And at about the same time the town became aware of the fact that Edward Pryce had not put in an appearance at the telegraph office that day.

Then the visit of Edward Pryce to the South Tipperary Hotel the previous evening became a matter of notoriety, and still was more a cause of wonder the story which Isaacs told of the previous night. It is true that the story of the hunchback was questioned. No doubt a gentleman who engaged the drawing room of the South Tipperary Hotel might be supposed

to carry with him a considerable sum of money; but that he had had anything like eleven to twelve hundred pounds with him was doubted.

His history of the previous evening, in the deposition he made before the magistrates was that he had waited for Edward Pryce, whose real name was Frederick Manton, until about midnight; that Manton then came, that he finished a glass of punch he had by him at the time, and remembered drinking another, and that that was all he had to drink that day, except a small bottle of Bass at his dinner. He had won a considerable sum of money, the previous evening from Manton, and this second meeting was for the purpose of giving the latter his revenge. As far as he remembered of what took place the evening before, they had played a few games of five-and-twenty. Frederick Manton had won all the games. The stakes had been high. He could not exactly remember how the last game had gone. He was sure he had not lost all his money. All his money was gone. He must have been drugged, for he found himself that morning lying under the couch in the drawing-room. He was prepared to swear that the whisky he had drunk that evening could not possibly have made him insensible. His pocket-book even was gone, and there was not upon his mind the shadow of a doubt that Frederick Manton had stolen it and his money.

Isaacs was asked why he had not denounced Manton as a perjurer. To this he replied that he had had nothing to do with Manton, and that he was, at the time the perjury was committed, in Dublin, upwards of a hundred miles away.

The night before Agnes had sat up until long past dawn. When he did not come she assumed that O'Grady had prevailed upon her lover to stop at Glenary House that night. Hence, although she was greatly disappointed at his not coming, she was not made in the least uneasy.

When next morning did not bring him she began to wonder he had not sent a message of some kind; for she knew he had always been careful in trifles, and in any other case of the kind he had always written to her, or sent a message by some other means. No alarm was felt about him, and Mr. Fail took no precautions to guard her against shock.

At three o'clock a groom came galloping into Clonmore, threw his bridle to the ostler of the South Tipperary Hotel, and ran up the steps. He asked the barmaid if Mr. Fitzgerald had come there the night before. She answered that he had not.

"Then I'm afraid it is all over with the poor gentleman," said the groom, "for we found his hat floating in the Slate Quarries just before I left."

The barmaid uttered an exclamation of horror.

"Do you know anything of Jimmy Dwyer?"

"Yes, he came back last evening."

"And did not bring Mr. Fitzgerald?"

"No. He came back with no one."

A man who happened to be standing at that moment in the bar was going west, and brought the news to Mr. Crotty, who had the largest draper's shop in the main street. This man was a stranger to the town, had arrived by an early train that morning, and had a business appointment with Crotty. When he got inside the door of Crotty's shop he first of all spoke of the business, and when it was disposed of, said:

"By the way, do you know a gentleman named Fitzgerald?"

"Yes," said Crotty, making a gesture which the other did not seem to understand.

"Well," said the other, "he's drowned. He was drowned in the Slate Quarries, wherever they are."

"For heaven's sake—no—hush!" Crotty turned hastily round, in time to see a strange smile on a pale, colourless, uplifted face, and to catch the form of a tall lithe girl, as it drooped forward from the high chair upon which she sat.

They carried Agnes into a room behind the

shop. It was more than an hour before she recovered. By that time her father had heard the news, and had come to Grotty's shop.

When Agnes recovered, she thanked those who had attended to her during her attack; and without saying another word, took her father's arm, and with head dropped low upon her chest walked home.

When the two got inside the door of the West Gate House the father took his child in his trembling arms, and said:

"Agnes, darling, do not give way. It may not be true. Remember, we have nothing for it but the groom's word. For my part, I am sure that Michael is now safe and sound at Glenary House, and that we shall have news of him in less than an hour."

She turned up her tearless face to his, and said, "You are very good, father, but I knew it was too good to last—I knew I did not deserve my happiness. My darling is dead."

With these words she slipped out of his arms, and passed away to her own room.

(To be continued.)

A good conscience is an excellent thing, and so, too, is a winsome manner. It should be carefully cultivated. When frankness becomes rudeness it should be properly checked.

ALWAYS say a kind word if you can, if only that it may come in, perhaps, with singular opportuneness, entering some mournful man's darkened room like a beautiful fire-fly, whose happy circumvolutions he cannot but watch, forgetting his many troubles.

How many take a wrong view of life, and waste their energies and destroy their nervous system in endeavouring to accumulate wealth, without thinking of the present happiness they are throwing away. It is not wealth or high station which makes a man happy. Many of the most wretched beings on earth have both; but it is a radiant, sunny spirit, which knows how to bear trials and enjoy comforts, and thus extract happiness from every incident in life.

SUMMER EXCURSIONS.—In getting up a picnic of your own, young folks, you must have a settled plan of action. You must know who are to compose the party, where you intend to go, and what you can do to amuse yourselves when you get there. Then, too, you must have what in armies is called a commissary department, which shall see about the provisions. A picnic without a dinner would be very dull. If the sport you choose is not within walking distance, it is well to know whether it can be easily reached by boat or cars, or by stage or carriage. You should find out beforehand precisely how much it will cost to convey the party to the spot. Then select a treasurer, who shall pay all expenses, buy tickets, and take charge of the funds. The treasurer must keep an exact account of everything he or she may spend, putting it down in writing, that a report may be given at the proper time. In providing luncheon it is an excellent idea for each one to bring some particular article, so that there may be enough of everything. Hard-boiled eggs, potted meats, thin slices of ham or tongue, cold chicken, and plenty of good bread and sweet butter, are among the must-haves. Picnic appetites are famous, and you need plenty of the "substantials." Jelly in little glasses, fruit cake, and pie, generally please the little people. Do not forget the salt. Nor the pepper. Bottles of milk wrapped in cabbage leaves are not to be overlooked. The girls must remember that so far as possible all picnic preparations should be made the day before. It is not well to leave cooking for the morning of the day when you are to go. The boys, too, should have their fishing-tackle in readiness over night. If swings are to be put up, a man should be engaged to see about them, or at least the oldest and most trustworthy boys of the party should see that the ropes are firm, and the tree branches stout. Nothing is more terrible in its consequences than a fall from a swing.

FACETIÆ.

WHY is roast mutton likely to remind a person of a sultry day?—Because it's hot wether.

MEN like to see themselves in print. Men are modest. Women like to see themselves in silk or velvet.

A PRETTY girl won a musket at a lottery. When they gave it to her, she asked, "Don't they give a soldier with it?"

WHEN half-a-dozen people are to dine upon a quarter of lamb, what is the proper time for dinner?—A quarter before six.

A CELEBRATED writer informs the world that "debt is a great stimulant," but De Brown says he prefers brandy. He has tried both.

SOPHRONIA: "What is philosophy?" "Well, dear, it is something that enables a person to bear with resignation the misfortunes of others."

WE are told that even the smallest hair throws a shadow. And so it does. It throws a shadow on your appetite when you find it on your plate.

"A LITTLE too much repose about the mouth for it to be natural," was the remark of a husband to a West-end photographer, who had taken his wife's photograph.

A Mechanic his labour will often disceard,

If the rate of his pay he dislikes;

But a clock, and its case, exceedingly hard,

Will continue to work, though it strikes.

IN the oil countries large quantities of gas are used for fuel. A man who uses it in his cook-stove was asked the other day why he did so, and replied: "Because it splits so much easier than wood."

AN auctioneer, by birth a native of the Green Isle, caused to be printed on his handbills at a recent sale, "Every article sold goes to the highest bidder, unless it so happens that some gentleman bids more."

"TAKE off your overcoat or you won't feel it when you go out," said the landlord of a Yorkshire inn to a guest who was sitting by the fire. "That's what I'm afraid of," returned the man. "The last time I was here I took off my overcoat. I didn't feel it when I went out, and I haven't felt it since."

IMITATION IS THE SINCEREST FLATTERY.—Nurse (to mistress): "I wanted to go into town this afternoon, if you could spare me, to get a new bonnet. And—I admire your taste in bonnets so much, mum I was a-thinkin' I couldn't do better than go to the same shop!"

DURING the great Indian rebellion a young soldier complained to Lord Clyde, then Sir Colin Campbell, that his (the complainant's) sword was "too short." Sir Colin immediately returned this answer: "Make it longer by going a step nearer to the enemy."

A LAWYER was compelled to apologize to the Court. With steady dignity he rose in his place and said, "Your honour is right, and I am wrong, as your honour generally is." There was a dazed look in the judge's eye, and he scarcely knew whether to feel happy or not.

A LADY whose husband has an unpleasant habit of railing at her has hit upon the plan of calling in her servants when he begins to let his temper rise, and then turning to him and saying sweetly, "Now, my dear, please go on with your remarks." He doesn't go on—at least, not as he began.

FORD FATHER: "May we hope for the pleasure of your company at our soiree to-morrow, doctor? We shall have a little instrumental and vocal music. My daughter Alice will sing and afterward Beatrice will recite her new poem. At nine o'clock we shall sup." Doctor: "Many thanks—you are very kind. I will be with you at nine sharp."

THE most powerful king on earth is working. The meanest king, skir-king. The most popular king, smo-king; and the leanest one, thin-king; and the slyest one, win-king; and the

most garrulous one, tal-king; and the thirstiest one, drink-ing. And then there is the hac-king, whose trade's a perfect mine; the dark-skinned monster, black-ing, who cuts the greatest shine; not to speak of ran-king, whose title's out of question; or famous ruler Ban-king, of good finance digestion.

A GENTLEMAN, visiting a Highland district, called upon a young couple and inquired of the guid wife how her husband was getting on with his garden.—"Garden!" quoth she—"he has something else to doo noo; he's making a philosophy."—"A philosophy! Dear me, what do you mean?"—"Ane o' the things that rins on twa wheels," replied the Highland dame, meaning a velocipede.

MADAME A., who resides in Paris, on discovering that her new cook's marketing accounts were not above suspicion, delivered a powerful allocution to the domestic. "Have pity upon me, madame," cried the servant, "and have patience. I have not been long in Paris, madame; but give me another chance, and you'll see if I don't improve. See if you can detect me."

AN IRISH CORRECTION.—An Irish Member of Parliament stated in the House of Commons that if the Land League had not existed crime would have been ten times as great. "There had been," he said, "great exaggerations in the reports of outrages. Three-quarters of the reports were exaggerated, and half the reports had no foundation whatever."

ONE Sunday, as a certain Scottish minister was returning homewards, he was accosted by an old woman, who said: "Oh, sir, well do I like the day when you preach." The minister was aware that he was not very popular, and he answered: "My good woman, I am glad to hear it. There are too few like you. And why do you like when I preach?" "Oh, sir," she replied, "when you preach I always get a good seat."

WHAT CAME OF CURIOSITY.—Some officers of a British ship were dining with a mandarin at Canton. One of the guests wished for a second helping of a savoury stew, which he thought was some sort of duck. Not knowing a word of Chinese, he held his plate to the host, saying, with smiling approval: "Quack, quack, quack!" His countenance fell when the host, pointing to the dish, responded: "Row, wow, wow!"

A CERTAIN young man brought his affianced down from the country to see the sights. "One day while they were passing the confectioner's, the swain noticed in the window a placard, bearing the announcement, 'Ice cream—five shillings per gal.' " "Well," said the young man, as he walked into the saloon, "that's a pretty steep price to charge for one gal, but Maria, I'll see you through, no matter what it costs. Here's five shillings, waiter; ice cream for this gal."

POT-VALIANT.—A local tipping worthy of a combative turn of mind, one dark night, when suffering from "barrel fever," ran hard against a pump and then to "Mother Earth." After getting up and steadying himself as best as he could, he peered cautiously to the left and then to the right of the object, and, having thus ascertained how matters stood, brandished his fists, and invitingly exclaimed, "Just lay doon yer stick, my we sonnie, and stap oot, an' a'll tak' it oot o' ye!"

A KING'S WIT.—The late Victor Emanuel, King of Italy, was a good-natured man; and quite apt in his retorts. The following is a specimen of his wit. When the King went to hear service in the Cathedral of Pisa one day with all his court, and a following of citizens which numbered some thousands, he found the great entrance closed against him. Some one proposed forcing the door, and the indignant people only wanted the slightest assent to give expression to their feelings by some overt act against the priestly authority. But the King, seeing a side-door open, said, smiling, "Let us pass in here, my friends; it is a narrow way that leads to Paradise."

SOCIETY.

THE DUKE OF WESTMINSTER and his bride have been staying at the Bath Hotel, Bournemouth, and at Exeter.

It may not generally be known that the Marquis of Salisbury is a great adept in chemistry, and gives most of his leisure time to its study.

THE Earl and Countess of Dudley have arrived with their family at Aboyne Castle. They will remain there until the beginning of October, when they go to Brighton.

THE Bishop of Newcastle is said to be the seventh abstaining prelate, the others being the Bishops of Durham, Gloucester, Exeter, Rochester, Dorset, and Bedford.

THE condition of the Scotch crofters is to be inquired into by Mr. Macfarlane, who, for that purpose, will combine business with pleasure by taking a yachting tour to the Western Islands and Hebrides.

THE latest decisions as to what is a luxury which a minor may indulge in without paying have been so novel that it might be useful, and certainly would be kind, to publish a list of minors' necessities and luxuries.

LADY WATERFORD is about to let Ford Castle for the autumn, with the shooting and fishing over 6,000 acres. Flodden Field lies just beneath the castle, where lived the fair Lady Heron, with whom James the Fourth's dalliance proved so disastrous to him.

AMONG the presents given to the Queen by Cetewayo are some Zulu baskets made from grasses and split cane. To the Prince of Wales he presented a carved walking-stick, a javelin, and some peculiar wooden figures. To the young Princes he gave a pair of assegais.

THE Marquis of Lorne and the Princess Louise are not expected to return to Ottawa until late in the autumn. The Governor-General is a great admirer of the game of La Crosse, and both he and the Princess frequently attend the matches which take place at Quebec. It is announced that they will shortly visit Vancouver's Island.

THE Prince and Princess Christian, who are travelling incognito as the Count and Countess Grafenstein, are staying for a short time at the Hotel Roseg, at Fontresina. They will also visit Darmstadt, Berlin, and other places in Germany. Their Royal Highnesses are accompanied by their sons the Princes Christian Victor and Albert of Schleswig-Holstein. The Royal party will be absent on the Continent about two months.

THE marriage of the Hon. Anthony Henley, second son of Lord Henley, with the only daughter of the late Colonel Williams, 3rd King's Own Hussars, took place on the 17th ult., at Feock, near St. Austell. The bride wore a rich cream-coloured satin dress, with a train of broché, bunches of orange blossom serving as trimming. The bridesmaids were attired in Surat blue satin, with white lace flounces, blue and forget-me-not lace round the neck, fastened with gold and enamel brooches, which were presented by the bridegroom. Lady Henley's dress, which was of purple velvet, was particularly admired.

THE Baroness Bolsover has been standing on her dignity in connection with the attitude assumed towards her family by a local cleric. A Sunday or two ago her ladyship, accompanied by Lady Ottoline Cavendish Bentinck and another lady, who were attending service in Cuckney Church, got up and left the edifice during the service, as a protest against the preacher failing to make his ministrations acceptable to his distinguished visitors. Mainly owing to this *contemptus* Lady Bolsover proposes in future to have special services at Welbeck, in the museum, and the first of these recently took place. We hear there is to be a surpliced choir and various other "accessories" to devotional exercises.

STATISTICS.

THE population of Scotland last year numbered 3,741,695 persons, according to the Registrar-General's report, and of these 1,802,901 were males, and 1,941,784 females. During the year there were 126,214 births, 72,301 deaths, and 25,948 marriages, the rate of each being below the average.

THE WORLD'S PRODUCTION OF LEAD IN 1881.—Spain, 120,000 metric tons; Germany, 90,000; England, 67,000; France, 15,000; Italy, 10,000; Greece, 9,000; Belgium, 8,000; Austria, 6,000; Russia, 1,500; total, 326,500 tons; United States, 110,000 tons. As the output of Mexico South America, Canada, and Australia is small, it is probably safe to assume that the world's production is about 440,000 tons of lead. This does not include China, which is a heavy consumer of lead, and is not unlikely a producer of some importance; nor does it include Japan, of whose output we have no figures.

GEMS.

A MAN in earnest find means; or, if he cannot find, creates them.

Do what you have to do just now, and leave it not for to-morrow.

Let what you do be done with a will. Energy and perseverance will accomplish wonders.

What is gratitude?—Gratitude is the memory of the heart.

What is hope?—Hope is the blossom of happiness.

What is the difference between hope and desire?—Desire is the tree of life, hope is a tree in flower, and enjoyment is a tree in fruit.

It is a very good lesson, though it is learnt with difficulty, and rarely practised—to love those who hate us. Who can do it?

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

VEAL LOAF.—Furnishes a good relish for supper. Take two pounds of veal and chop it very fine, about as if for mince-meat; two coffee cups of fine bread crumbs, two eggs well beaten, a teaspoonful of salt with black pepper mixed with it, a little sifted sage, or any other leaf you choose, and a lump of butter to suit your taste. Beat these all together in the chopping-bowl, and put in an earthen pudding-dish, well buttered; press it down very hard. Bake in a hot oven for an hour. Let it get perfectly cold before you attempt to cut it; then it will be possible to cut it in thin slices.

ICE PUDDING.—Put one quart of milk into a stewpan with $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of white sugar and a stick of vanilla; leave it to boil ten minutes. Mix the yolks of ten eggs with a gill of cream, pour in the milk, then put it back again into the stewpan, and stir until it thickens, but do not let it boil; strain it into a basin, and leave it to cool. Take 12 lb. of ice, pound it small, add $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of fine salt; mix together quickly, cover the bottom of an ice pail (a common pail will do), place the ice pot in it, and build it around with the ice and salt. This done, pour the cream into the pot, put on the cover, and never cease turning until the cream becomes thick; move it from the sides occasionally with the ice scoop, to prevent it getting into hard lumps. The mould to be used to set the pudding should be put on ice to get quite cold. It is then filled with the cream to the level, and three or four pieces of white paper wetted with cold water are placed on it before you put on the cover, which should fit very tight. The mould is then buried in the same mixture of ice and salt used for freezing the cream in the first instance, and is left until wanted, when it is dipped in cold water, turned out on a napkin, and served. Dried fruits, cut small, may be put in the cream when the mould is being filled.

MISCELLANEOUS.

PERSONS who indulge in a dreamy and visionary habit of mind are frequently both unpractical and unsuccessful; but this proceeds not from an excess of imaginative power, but from the lack of training it aright, and of supplementing its action by determined industry.

THINK not that you are the only one who has to endure, and who dreads the hardships of life. Ease and comfort are the natural desires of the human heart, and there are thorns, real or imaginary, in every one's pathway. But sitting down and brooding will never bring power to over them. Rather be up and doing thankful for the blessings still remaining.

FEMINE PECULIARITIES.—There are little peculiarities individual to the fair sex which are both curious and amusing. Why does a woman so often drop her fan or her handkerchief? That has puzzled many a masculine brain. There are two reasons for the accident, if it be so called for want of a better word. First, the fair creature's tongue runs so fast that the wagging of the organ loosens the tension of the muscles of the hand; second, the fan or handkerchief is purposely dropped that a "horrid man" may show his gallantry in picking it up, and ten chances to one the lady purposely beats him in that operation after he has bent his rheumatic limbs in an effort to be gallant. She is satisfied with the display of servility. Why do women, if looked at by a man, proceed at once to chew their lips or convulsively press them together in the intervals of chewing? That proceeds sometimes from modesty which urges them to do something to divert their minds from the masculine impudence or admiration, or it may suggest that the owner has a very kissable mouth, the lips of which, bitten, will become beautifully red, or it may be the result of the unpleasant feeling of a new set, or the oscillatory movement of an old set, of false teeth. You need not pay any money for the show, and yet you take your choice of reasons. Why is it that women with fine eyes roll them towards the ceilings or the sky? That is easily answered. They wish to look angelic, and they usually do.

PATIENCE.—Men as a race are not so patient as women; perhaps one of the principal causes is that man is more selfish than his gentle counterpart. A man grieves most at his own misfortunes, while women with the generous movement of their souls and pity for their gentle hearts, are touched more by the troubles of other people. Because women do not suffer as much as men, it must not be inferred that they do not feel so much. No one ever accused women of unfeeling stupidity. The fault if anything lies in the opposite extreme—an over-refined delicacy. Now sensibility, whether of joy or misery, arises in proportion to our ingenuity or delicacy of mind. And no one ever yet doubted that the mind of man is coarser than that of woman. Afflictions, therefore, fall not so heavily on his as they do on the refined disposition of women. Nay, how often is one of the opposite sex touched by a fine distress that a man never feels. Thus the same ingenuity and delicacy of mind which sheds such lovely lustre around everything in her days of prosperity, and imparts such an exquisite relish to every joy when she does rejoice, casts a deeper shade on her soul in adversity, and gives a keener edge to pain and misery. Mark her when visited by calamity. How violent are the first starts and sallies of her grief! But how soon, after adversity, with its slow cumbering motions, and its foul and ragged footsteps has trodden over the smooth and pleasant surface of her soul, deadening its activities and making all its powers stand still—does patience, transmitting its kindly and enlivening beams, comfort her spirit, and so soothe it as to make it discontinue its course of grief and even become serene and bright; so the tender grass, beaten down upon the earth by the heavy falling of a shower of rain, will again, by the clear shining of the sun, spring off its blossoms.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. N.—Some authorities state that the author of the well-known song "Ann a Laurie," is unknown, while others claim that it was written by William Douglas, of England, in the stewardship of Kircudbright, Scotland.

FRED.—Florin is the name of a gold coin first struck in Florence, in the thirteenth century. It was the size of a ducat, and had on one side the head of John the Baptist, and on the other a lily. Some derive the name from the city, others from the flower.

FORREST.—1. If you feel confident of your ability to support the lady in a style becoming her station in life, by all means marry her. Before doing so, however, weigh carefully the advantages and disadvantages pertaining to matrimony, and do not let any rose-tinted ideas hasten this judgment. Many young lives have been wrecked by hasty marriage, confirming the truth of the old adage, "Marry in haste and repent at leisure." 2. August 25.

"HOPELESS AND DISHEARTENED."—You state that the loss of confidence in yourself has happened within the last two years, prior to which time you were blessed with a superabundance of courage. This feeling is doubtless due to a loss of nervous energy, the only remedy for which being a regular course of treatment under the guidance of an experienced physician. Your nervous system in former years has been worked to its fullest capacity, and now the effects are making themselves painfully visible. In such a morbid state of mind as you describe, the patient should shun all associations which tend to depress the already-weakened senses, and endeavour to think of that which is cheerful and beautiful.

LA BALLE.—Mr. James Heath, the inventor of the Bath chair, died at his residence in Bath on August 22, at the age of seventy-nine.

M. J. P.—While the destruction of forests goes on in Great Britain the work of tree-planting is also prosecuted with no small energy. During the season 1881-82 there were planted on various estates in the United Kingdom no less than 3,156,826 trees, of which 2,175,826 were planted in Scotland, 646,300 in England, 294,800 in Ireland, and 40,600 in Wales.

ALBA J.—It is nonsense for you to think the lady dislikes you simply because she says smart things at your expense. Many girls who think themselves rather smart are very fond of such light chaff, and you will have a sad time of it in society if you cannot take and give a little teasing. It is not well-bred to ask for soup a second time; and, indeed, at formal dinners you should not partake of any one course twice. Of course greater latitude is allowed in one's own home. Don't take the last drop, however; never tilt your plate. Always pass plates with the right hand.

R. F.—You should pronounce "corps" giving the entire sound to each letter; only in poetry is the *p* silent and the word spelled and pronounced "corse."—Somewhere in the neighbourhood of 116 lbs. and five feet four inches would be a good average weight and height for a boy of seventeen. The word *symp* is pronounced as if the *y* was an *i* like the *i* in *tin*, short.

MAY K.—1. December 4, 1854, fell on Monday. 2. There are many recipes published for the removal of superfluous hairs on the body, the most reliable of which is that of plucking them out by the roots with tweezers. The root being removed, it is obvious that no more hair will grow in its place. It is a very painful and barbarous proceeding, but is practised by many to whom the hair has become a source of great annoyance. In using depilatories they should be applied to only a small portion at a time, and great care should be exercised in preventing their extension to the adjacent parts.

SUMMER.—The suits worn by ladies during the warm months are nearly all made of thin fabrics, which require the greatest care in keeping clean and fresh-looking; consequently, the art of preserving their new appearance after washing is a matter of the greatest importance. In the first place, the water should be tepid, the soap should not be allowed to touch the fabric; it should be washed and rinsed quickly, turned upon the wrong side, and hung in the shade to dry, and when starched (in thin-bolled, but not boiling starch), should be folded in sheets or towels, and ironed upon the wrong side as soon as possible. A handful of salt in the water is very useful in setting the colour of light cambrics or dotted lawns. No soda or other washing compound should on any account be used, if you wish to preserve the fabric in its purity.

TIM.—The etymology of the word *Whig* is doubtful; probably derived from the Scottish *whig*, or the Anglo-Saxon *whagan*, whey, a mixed drink, composed of water and sour milk, which the Scots Covenanters drank; or from the initial letters of the motto, "We hope in God!" assumed by a political party in Scotland, in 1643, opposed to the court faction. It was the designation of a well-known political clique in England, first assumed by the party who brought about the Revolution of 1688, and the establishment of William III. upon the throne. In America, a *Whig* was an upholder of American liberties during the Revolutionary War, as opposed to the Royalists or Tories. It was also a name assumed by a political party which flourished from 1829 to 1853. The term *Tory* was originally given to an adherent to the ancient constitution of the English monarchy, and to the apostolical hierarchy. In a more modern sense it signified one who, in political bias and principles, always leans to Church and State, supports the regal, ecclesiastical and aristocratic institutions, as by law established, and is jealous of the extension of democratic power and of radical constitutional changes. The term is, to a certain extent, extinct, the party-name now assumed being that of Conservatives as opposed to the Liberals.

HARROGATE.—1st. All Saints or All Hallows' Day comes on the first of November; so, of course, All Hallows' Eve is the night of the 31st day of October. 2nd. Usually white, except in the case of second marriages. 3rd. Most forms of the marriage ceremony require the bride to promise solemnly to love, honour and obey her future husband, and all noble views of marriage assume love as its basis. If you cannot make this promise in sincerity, you should not marry at all. On the other hand, in a little time you may find yourself less in love than you now think you are, and perhaps you may find, by-and-by, that you are able to honestly promise to love the man whom you respect now, and whom your parents think it would be well for you to marry. 4th. As you do not tell us anything about your cousin's age, sex, appearance, character, social condition, or previous relations with you, we cannot say whether or not the extent to which you give him your society is a just cause of jealousy. However, as your lover, who is probably acquainted with all the circumstances of the case, is jealous, we think that very likely it is.

M. L.—Judging from your handwriting, spelling and composition, your education at present would only fit you to be what is called a nursery-governess. In this position you would have to be with the children all day, take care of them, and would not be paid much more than an ordinary domestic. Your proper course is to study hard for two or three years, giving special attention to the primary branches, and acquiring at least the rudiments of French and German. If circumstances compel you to take the care of children now, you must make up your mind to devote every moment you can snatch to self-education, in order to acquire the knowledge necessary to become an effective and successful teacher of the young.

ON THE VILLAGE GREEN.

When our work was done, and the setting sun
Was low in the western sky,
On the village green youths and maids were seen,
Hand in hand in the days gone by,
And the old folks there, with their silvered hair,
Would say to each other, perchance,
"Each maiden and youth dances well, in truth,
But not as we used to dance!"

And many a lad on the green, who had
No thought of the cares of life,
Never dreamt at all, at that rural ball,
That he danced with his future wife,
And many a maid on the village glade,
Who captured a heart with a glance,
Lived, through griefs and joys, to see girls and boys
Dance—not as she used to dance!

I remember well, as the twilight fell,
I stood by a maiden fair,
And her smile to-night is as sweet and bright
As that which she used to wear.
When the setting sun saw the games begun
On the village green's expanse,
And we danced, as we two, as my children do,
But not as we used to dance!

And a day will dawn as the years roll on,
When they and their children, too,
Will watch the play at close of day,
As I and my wife now do.
They will say with pride to those at their side,
"These reels, as our years advance,
Are very well done, but assuredly none
Now dance as we used to dance!"

E. L.

N. F. R.—There have been no Mamelukes in Egypt for the last seventy years. They were destroyed by Mehemet Ali in the year 1811. The word *Mameluke* means a slave. The Mamelukes were originally composed of slaves—young men captured in war or bought in the market. They were first introduced into Egypt as a military force about six hundred years ago by the then reigning Sultan. After a time they did most of the fighting, and so, as a matter of course, they acquired most of the governing power, and became intolerably ferocious and tyrannical. That was the reason that Mehemet Ali at last extirpated them. He beguiled all the chiefs—four hundred and seventy in number—into the citadel at Cairo, closed the gates, and then had them massacred. Only one escaped, by leaping his horse from the ramparts of the citadel. Having thus destroyed the chiefs, Mehemet Ali next ordered a general massacre of all the rest of the Mamelukes throughout Egypt, and the work was remorselessly carried out.

MILLY F.—If by "paying attentions" is meant that the young man has led a girl, young and an orphan, to believe that he loves her, and that he wants her to love him in return, he certainly ought to intend to propose marriage. But unhappily it is unsafe to presume that men will always act honourably and as they ought; and an orphan girl, who has no mother to counsel her, nor father to defend her, must try to be more than ordinarily prudent, and should not entrust her happiness hastily to any one.

S. T.—1. Macaulay's "History of England" contains the lives and principal events in the reigns of the different kings of England. Hume's "History of England" is another standard work of authority on the subject. These works may be obtained for you by any first-class bookseller. 2. It would be a very difficult task to obtain the family records referred to unless you know the city in France where the family resided. If you are acquainted with that name, address a communication to the United States Minister at Paris, who will doubtless give you all the needed information as to whom to apply for the records.

S. T. J.—Consult a lawyer in regard to the manner of obtaining a pardon for your friend. The one employed in his defence would be the most likely person to give you the needed information.

L. R.—1. We know of no means by which the skin on the face may be thickened. Consult a doctor in relation to the pain experienced. 2. In order to possess a clear complexion it is necessary that the blood and secretions should be kept in perfect order. Lead a regular life, and perhaps in the course of time your desire will be consummated.

ELITE.—Cold cream is a simple and cooling ointment exceedingly serviceable for rough or chapped hands in winter, or for keeping the skin soft. It is very easily made. Take half an ounce of white wax and put it into a small basin, with two ounces of almond oil. Place the basin by the side of a fire until the wax is dissolved in the oil. When quite melted, add two ounces of rose-water. This must be done very slowly, and as you pour it in, beat the mixture smartly with a fork, to thoroughly incorporate the water with the other ingredients. When completely mixed, the cold cream is ready for use, and may be poured into pomade bottles or small jars. This is an article which it is much better to make yourself than to purchase, as that sold in the shops is too frequently made of inferior ingredients.

L. J. B.—Yes, we will willingly "settle the dispute once for all" between you and your friends. A married lady should never sign any but her own name, as: "Your sincere friend, Jessie Jones;" or, "Yours, with great respect, Jessie Jones." To an employer, or a tradesman, she should sign simply J. Jones; but documents of every kind, autographic notes, &c., with her own full name. A lady only uses her husband's name upon her visiting-card; and for her to sign herself, under any circumstances, as *Mrs.* is pronounced vulgar by quality people. It must be said, however, that it is very proper, indeed, in writing to a stranger, on business or otherwise, to indicate that you are a woman, and also married or single, as the case may be. It is very provoking to receive a note and not know the sex or condition of the writer—as many an editor can attest.

N. J.—Broadway is the central thoroughfare of New York city, and is eighty feet wide. Tennyson's birth-place was Somersby, Lincolnshire, England. As he was born in 1810 he must be about seventy-two years old. It would take too long to mention even his principal poems. You can get a paper-covered volume containing his poetical works complete for about 1s. or 1s. 3d. We do not doubt that you would find many words in his poems which you would not find in any dictionary. Nearly all poets and many authors have a habit of coining words to suit their particular needs. Custom has made these words a part of our language, but no one dictionary does contain all of these newly-made words, or even all the technical terms and slang and colloquial phrases of the English language. Tennyson, however, more than any other English poet of his generation, uses clear-cut, precise English diction and words. It is Browning who will confound you (and you will confound him in turn) with his unintelligible phraseology both of expression and meaning.

D. D.—1. There are few prettier ornaments, and none more economical and lasting, than bouquets of dried grasses, mingled with various unchangeable flowers. They have but one fault, and that is the want of other colours besides yellow, drab, or brown. To vary their shade artificially, these flowers are sometimes dyed green. This, however, is both unnatural and in bad taste. The best effect is produced by blending rose and red tints, together with a very little pale blue, with the grasses and flowers, as they dry naturally. To do this most effectually dip them into a spirituous liquid solution of the various compounds of aniline. Some of these have a beautiful rose shade; others, red, blue, orange, and purple. The depth of colour can be regulated by diluting, if necessary, the original dyes with spirit down to the shade desired. When taken out of the dye they should be exposed to the air to dry off the spirit. They then require arranging, or setting into form, as, when wet, the petals and thin filaments exhibit a great tendency to cling together. A pink saucer, as sold by most druggists, will supply enough rose-dye for two ordinary bouquets. This saucer yields the best rose-dye by washing it off with water and lemon-juice. The aniline dyes yield the best violet, mauve and purple colours. 2. In order to rid yourself of black ants boil four ounces of quassia chips in one gallon of water for ten minutes, and add four ounces of soft soap. Put this in places frequented by these pests, and the effect will prove satisfactory. Pulverized borax, sprinkled in closets, cupboards, &c., is also highly recommended.

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